

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING MOUNTAIN BIKE MAGAZINE

JULY 2015  
ISSUE 317

# Mountain Biking UK<sup>®</sup>



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**MAINTENANCE**

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Step-by-step guide  
to your perfect set-up

**REASONS TO RIDE**

## THE TRAILS VS TARMAC

Why off-road beats  
road riding every time!

Game of drones – it's mountain biking viewed from the skies – pg 75  
Great UK rides – Mable Forest, Lake District, Cotswolds and more!

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- WMB



29

## Santa Cruz Tallboy CarbonC

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**Complete Builds from £2,999**

### Tallboy CarbonC

R XC

**£2,999**

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**£70.81\***  
PER MONTH

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36 monthly payments  
total paid - £2,999

**0% APR**  
Representative

Wheel Size: 29  
Fork: Rock Shox Recon Gold TK 120  
Shock: Fox Float CTD  
Build Kit: R XC

Also Available  
Tallboy CarbonC - S XC  
Fork: Fox 32 Float FIT CTD 120  
Shock: Fox Float CTD  
Build Kit: S XC  
**£3,199**



"... an impressive bike: it's light, stiff and incredibly capable. The race-tuned suspension is not for the timid; it rewards riders who prefer to charge through technical sections."  
- Bikeradar



27.5

## Santa Cruz Bronson CarbonC

Award-winning performance in a complete package delivers our best ever value.

**Complete Builds from £3,099**

### Bronson CarbonC

R AM

**£3,099**

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**£73.17\***  
PER MONTH

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36 monthly payments  
total paid - £3,099

**0% APR**  
Representative

Wheel Size: 27.5  
Fork: Rock Shox Sektor Gold RL 150  
Shock: Fox Float CTD  
Build Kit: R AM

Also Available  
Bronson CarbonC - S AM  
Fork: Rock Shox Pike RC SA 150  
Shock: Fox Float CTD  
Build Kit: S AM  
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**SANTA CRUZ**

Juliana

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"This little bike left us delightfully surprised, not only with its climbing prowess but the level of descending it was capable of."  
- Pinkbike

"Super-stiff, dynamic driving, lightweight trail weapon with massive upgrade potential at a bargain price"  
- MBUK



27.5



27.5

### Juliana Furtado CarbonC

Designed to reign over steep and fast terrain, Furtado is the Monarch of the Mountain  
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### Santa Cruz 5010 CarbonC

A fixed mid-range build and new carbon frame layup delivers the same 5010 quality at a lower entry point.  
Complete Builds from **£3,099**

**Furtado CarbonC**  
R AM

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0% FINANCE FROM  
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total paid - £3,099

**0% APR**  
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Wheel Size: 27.5  
Fork: Rock Shox Sektor Gold RL 130  
Shock: Fox Float CTD  
Build Kit: R AM

Also Available  
Juliana Joplin CarbonC  
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29" wheels  
100mm travel  
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**5010 CarbonC**  
R AM

**£3,099**

0% FINANCE FROM  
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PER MONTH

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Also Available  
5010 CarbonC - S AM  
Fork: Rock Shox Pike RC 130  
Shock: Fox Float CTD  
Build Kit: S AM  
**£3,999**







# ***THE TRAIL LEGEND REBORN***

---

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An aerial photograph of a dark, textured volcanic landscape, likely a sand dune or ash field. The terrain is marked by deep, parallel ridges and grooves. In the lower center, a small group of people and bicycles are gathered. A large yellow banner with the word 'MAVIC' in black is positioned in the lower right. Another yellow banner with 'MAVIC' is visible in the upper right. The overall scene is dramatic and desolate.

**MAVIC**

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WARNING: Bicycling is a dangerous sport which may result in serious injury or even death. For proper use of your helmet, please refer to the owner's manual.





CRC PayPal rider Joe Smith on our cover shoot near Llangollen, Wales



Matt feeling the love on his Surly ICT fatbike. See MBUK Machines on page 112

## BE AN INSIDER

We want to know what you think. After all, the more we know about you, the better placed we are to bring you the best magazine possible. So we'd like to invite you to join our online reader panel, Insiders.

Interested? Log on to [www.immediateinsiders.com/register](http://www.immediateinsiders.com/register) to fill out the short registration survey and we'll be in touch from time to time to ask for your opinions on the magazine and other relevant issues.

insiders

## EDITOR'S LETTER

# Hit the trails hard and look after your bike



We've been making the most of the decent conditions and light evenings to get out riding even more than normal of late. We are lucky to have so many awesome places to ride in the UK, and here at MBUK we're even luckier still with tons of top trails right on our doorstep. While there have been more thrills than we can count, we've all had a fair few spills too. Dep Art Ed Matt won Slam of the Month when hitting the

jumps at the Forest of Dean on his Ice Cream Truck and inadvertently pulling a half frontflip. The resulting slam gave him concussion and a few broken ribs as his chest-mounted GoPro punched through them. Ouch. See how the world looked to Matt moments before he was reunited with Mother Earth over on page 114.

As we pushed things to the limits on dry trails some questions arose – which key components were holding us back and how would we make them better? Check out our definitive list of the best upgrades to improve almost any bike over on page 90.

As well as fitting out our two-wheeled steeds with shiny new bits, hard riding means rewarding them with loads of TLC. Over on page 81 we show you the best ways to look after your pride and joy and ensure that it will always be in thoroughbred condition, as well as how to keep it safe from thieves. Enjoy reading the issue and hitting the trails!

*Danny*

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**Danny Walter** MBUK Editor

\* Pull-out maps not available to overseas readers

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**THE STUFF  
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GO TO FIRST!**





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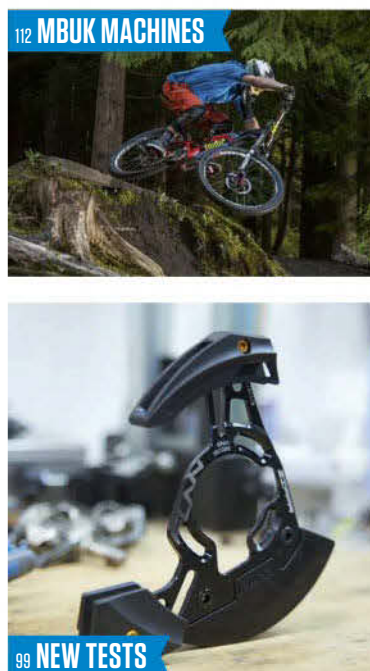


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# MBUK Out Front

THE **FIVE STORIES** LEADING  
THE WAY THIS MONTH

Andreu Lacondeguy gives it some serious style at the Santa Cruz FEST event

## FEST SERIES

# Rebels with a cause

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**I**n the early days, freeriding was all about pushing boundaries and, in an age when racing was king, doing so outside the constraints of competition. But as the discipline grew, organised events started to spring up and some of the sport's biggest stars began to carve out careers on the contest scene.

Frustrations began to develop though, with some riders feeling that freeriding just wasn't progressing. The first to speak openly was Catalanian wildman – and 2014 Red Bull Rampage champ – Andreu Lacondeguy. Concerned that the slopestyle format was becoming too close to BMX, he set out to find a way of showing what today's bikes and riders were truly capable of. After

hooking up with some like-minded individuals, the FEST Series was born.

Santa Cruz, California, was the first stop on the 2015 tour, and what an event it turned out to be. The FEST Series is all about riders taking the progression of freeride into their own hands. With no fixed plan or timetable, the chilled vibe and relaxed format let the assembled freeriders ease into tackling some of the largest jumps and lines yet seen at an MTB event.

It's not about podiums and results at FEST, but the videos that surfaced showed creativity, flow and some serious slams – most notably from Andreu himself. Thankfully he walked away without any serious injuries. We can't wait for more from these nutters over the coming months! 🌀

Photo: Ian Collins







# Wild riding in North Wales

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**S**itting high up in the Cambrian mountains, a 20-minute drive inland from the town of Aberystwyth, Nant yr Arian forest offers riders some of the best wilderness riding that North Wales has to offer, with great views, big climbs, icy river crossings and rock-strewn descents.

While it's the natural feel of the trails that gives them their appeal, the team at Natural Resources Wales have been working with Mei Black of

trail builders Extreme Track to provide an even better riding experience. In the first trail building project at Nant yr Arian for 10 years, the Summit Trail has had 400m of flowing singletrack added. Dubbed Mab Zorro (Welsh for Son of Zorro) it's been designed to help riders pick up speed as they carve through the forest. The new section brings the total length of the trail to nearly 20km.

If you want an even bigger challenge, there's always the epic

Syfydrin trail, which at 35km takes in all of Nant-yr-Arian's singletrack and includes some of the best technical and exposed riding in Wales, with some fabulous views to boot.


The rugged and somewhat desolate nature of Nant yr Arian can catch out riders expecting a more conventional trail centre experience, so pack extra food, water and warm clothing if heading here. And don't forget the daily red kite feeding at the visitor centre. 

Photo: Andy Lloyd





DH DAMPERS

## The end of the coil shock?

**W**hile trail riders have long since adopted air-sprung suspension, most downhill racers still use coil-sprung dampers, but the tide is starting to turn, with air shocks and forks appearing on many top riders' bikes this year.

BOS claimed the first DH World Cup win on an air-sprung bike in 2013 and RockShox have offered DH air shocks for several years too. The big news this year is Fox's new X2 damper – and the fact Aaron Gwin rode it

to victory at the first World Cup round in France.

The benefits of air springs are hard to ignore. "You can adjust the spring weight 1psi at a time instead of in 25lb increments, so it offers superior performance and tuning at half the weight," says BOS's Graziella Laurenty. You can also tweak the spring curve to create a damper that's progressive but, in the words of Mojo Suspension's Chris Porter, offers "initial movement better than a coil shock".

So why have air shocks taken so long to catch on in

downhill? Partly it's because the frames have always been designed around coil dampers and, according to Chris, "fitting an air shock in a linkage designed to harness the advantages of a linear coil shock results in a sloppy mid stroke."

With more frames likely to be built around the latest air shocks, coil suspension may not be dead yet but it's definitely had its heyday in DH. Ultimately we'll all benefit, as the tech from advances in DH air shocks trickles down to the kind of bikes most of us ride. ⚙

01

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Inflate the integrated canister, pull the red handle and your tyre should be flooded with air, helping to seat it on the rim

BONTRAGER PUMP

## Get set up tubeless in a Flash

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**T**ry as you might, some combinations of tubeless tyres and rims just don't seem to want to go together. The faster you pump air into the tyre, the faster it leaks out the sides, and the bead just refuses to pop on to the rim.

There are many tricks of the trade for solving this problem. These include using an industrial compressor or CO<sub>2</sub> inflator to inflate

the tyre fast enough to seat the tyre on the rim. Bontrager believe they've come up with a solution in the form of the TLR Flash Charger. At £100, it's quite a lot cheaper than an industrial air compressor and far less wasteful than using a CO<sub>2</sub> canister every time you swap a tyre.

You simply use the integrated track pump to fill the canister with air, stopping when it reaches 140psi.

Then pull the red handle and the tyre will be rapidly flooded with air, (hopefully) seating the tyre on the rim before all the air leaks out. You can then adjust the tyre pressure by adding more air with the pump or releasing it using the bleed valve. Does it work? We'll let you know! ⚙️

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...BY A CROSS COUNTRY MILE'**

**WHAT MOUNTAIN BIKE** ★★★★★

No marketing hype from us - this is straight from the horse's mouth from the April '15 issue of What Mountainbike magazine. The editorial test crew loved the all new Cannondale F-Si for its progressive XC geometry, super stiff Lefty and out-and-out speed. The future of XC is here.

Model featured: F-Si Carbon Team - £5,499.99 RRP  
Cannondale F-Si range from £2,999.99 - £ 6,999.99 RRP

[CANNONDALE.COM](http://CANNONDALE.COM)



**cannondale**





CRAIG EVANS

## Steel city shredder goes factory

**S**heffield has spawned some great riders, from 90s XC star David Baker to DH/4X ace and current Madison Saracen manager Will Longden – and, of course, the living legend that is Steve Peat. Now the next wave are coming through and, like those who went before them, they can hang it out on and off the race track.

While the name Craig Evans may be new to some, his exploits on

camera will no doubt ring a few bells – he appeared in Cotic's *26 ain't dead* edit and On-One's Codeine launch video, both of which were made by Sheffield cohorts Steel City Media.

There's more to Craig than wild video edits though. He showed his raw speed and talent in 2013 when he finished 62nd at his first World Cup, so it comes as no surprise that he's now on the Hope Factory Racing team. "The goal for 2015 is to have

a bloody good time," Craig says.

"Obviously I've thought about results and where I'd like to be, but I find I ride way better when I'm more chilled out and having fun."

So what's the key to Craig's speed? "Most of the riding I used to do was just sessioning four corners all day and going as fast as I possibly could until I exploded. Actually, that's probably the kind of riding I still do. Haha!" Practice makes perfect! ⚙️





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Navara 2.5 dCi 190PS: URBAN 26.4mpg (10.7L/100km), EXTRA URBAN 39.8mpg (7.1L/100km), COMBINED 33.6mpg (8.4L/100km), CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 222g/km.

Model shown features metallic paint at £495 extra. \*Tow bar available at extra cost. £250 Salomon vouchers can only be redeemed at [Salomon.co.uk](http://Salomon.co.uk) (not available for use in store). Terms apply. Offer open to retail customers only. Model shown is Nissan Navara Salomon edition. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing, and intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results. Optional equipment, maintenance, driving behaviour, road and weather conditions may affect the results. Nissan Motor GB (Ltd), The Rivers Office Park, Denham Way, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 9YS.



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- 130mm in length
- 113 grams
- Small diameter



## BEARCLAW SRP £22.99

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## FEATURING



**27 CORNER FASTER!**  
It's all about the lean angle



**31 SHOWSTOPPERS**  
Six sweet custom MTBs



**36 SPESH'S NEW KIT**  
650b+ Stumpy, and more

**Super Bike** Have Lapierre built the ultimate UK trail bike? – pg 61

## Trickle-down trails

*Our favourite routes are becoming bigger, faster and steeper*

**M**ountain biking has evolved massively over the years, and not just in terms of bike technology and rider skill. While the sport's pioneers cut their teeth cruising fireroads, hiking paths and riding the occasional ribbon of singletrack created by wildlife or livestock, we now have access to scores of professionally built trails.

While the early trail centre routes were mostly natural-feeling XC loops, visit any of the UK's riding hotspots today and you'll find a variety of manmade obstacles inspired by other disciplines in our sport. From berms to jumps, rock gardens to

drops, it's not hard to spot elements on the trails we all ride that wouldn't have looked out of place on a 4X or downhill track just a few years ago.


This evolution is being fuelled by several factors, including the capabilities of modern trail bikes and trail builders pushing the envelope. And it's not just confined to your local loop or favourite trail centre. Wherever you look – from bike parks to DH tracks – the thin strips of dirt we ride our bikes on are progressing all the time. Bigger, faster, longer, steeper and sometimes scarier – it's never been a better time to be a mountain biker. 

Photo: Steve Bahr





**SAM FLANAGAN**  
HOPE FACTORY TEAM ENDURO RACER

**“** Home – the more time you spend away from it, the more you appreciate it. After a month in New Zealand sampling the delights that Queenstown delivers in shovelfuls, I couldn't have been happier barrelling out the doors of Manchester airport to be met by drizzle and grey skies.

With heavy rain forecast for the next few days I found myself quietly content, slipping into the standard routine of lighting fires to dry saturated Five Tens, cleaning the bike after a spin to the shops, hosing down kit before I could even think about taking it near a washing machine and wearing a minimum of 14 layers per ride.

After a few happily miserable days, the weather deteriorated and actual dust was found in the Lake

District. Was this some kind of a sick joke? Couple this with the foreign ball of flame in the sky not dropping below the horizon till past 8pm, and you can imagine my distress. Where was all the snow and suffering?

As lambs skipped happily in the fields, I found myself furiously bashing my details into Skyscanner – I needed to get back to the southern hemisphere for some winter weather! Wet roots and that mid-descent sensation of zero feeling in the fingers or face, making you unsure if you're pulling a brake lever or just clutching at thin air – that hardship is what's crafted us into the riders we are today!

**”**



**Definitely Mable** There's more to this Scottish trail centre than waymarked routes –

## Pick up a spade and dig in!

*Scottish bikers get down and dirty for a weekend of trail building*

**Spectacular scenery, rugged terrain and the right to roam mean Scotland is home to some of the best riding in the UK. But trails don't maintain themselves – our continued enjoyment of them relies on the hard work of trail builders, many of them local volunteers. Scottish Cycling and Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland ([www.DMBinS.com](http://www.DMBinS.com)) are keen to involve more riders, so they organised a Take Care Of Your Trails weekend at 14 riding spots across the country. Graeme McLean, Project Manager for DMBinS told us all about it.**

**“I had the idea after taking part in a Big Spring Beach Clean organised by Surfers Against Sewage in 2014 with my family. DMBinS work with several groups who help to repair trails and paths, and we felt that a nationally co-ordinated day would help raise the profile of the great work that mountain biker volunteers do.**

**“We believe the weekend was a great success. The vast majority of groups involved have recruited several new volunteers, and that's what the weekend was all about – raising the profile of the groups that**

took part as well as getting new, enthusiastic people to help keep our trails world class.

**“It's really important to educate riders about how trails are built and maintained.**

In Scotland we have a vast network of purpose-built trails and amazing access legislation that means mountain bikers can ride just about anywhere, providing we're responsible. Although the trails are free to ride there's a cost to landowners to maintain them, so it feels like a fair deal to give something back and help maintain them.

**“We're seeing a generation who've grown up riding trail centres and are now advanced bike riders who are wanting to explore wider into the countryside and discover natural, 'hidden' trails. I think this is great, and it also helps spread the economic benefit of mountain biking to our more fragile rural areas.**

**“The paths in these areas aren't purpose built for bikes, so we need to adjust our riding styles and be sensitive to the impact we have. When exploring, we also need to be prepared for more remote environments and ensure we're**

self-sufficient, well equipped and have adequate map reading and compass skills to get ourselves home safely.

**“Good cake and coffee is a great start to building a sense of community. Creating mountain biking communities is vitally important in developing and sustaining the sport for the future. There isn't a single action to achieve this though – it takes people of all ages to take part in a range of activities, from clubs and events to trail repair sessions, film nights and so on.**

**“I definitely think Take Care Of Your Trails has the potential to be rolled out across the UK. I've met people running the trail centres in Wales and they have some amazing volunteer projects running there. You never know – DMBinS and Take Care of your Trails could go global!**

**“We've just received £2m to develop facilities close to towns and communities across Scotland. This will give us a great opportunity to grow the number of people riding mountain bikes. We're also at the cutting edge of the sport, with the World Cup returning to Fort Bill and the Enduro World Series hitting the Tweed Valley.”**



## G Missy Giove

**One of the most memorable personalities from the early days of downhill, Missy Giove wasn't your average racer. Back in the days of big budget DH racing she was a sponsor's dream, with her 'all or nothing' attitude getting her a lot of attention...**

**Az** Melissa 'Missy' Giove was born in 1972. After a stint as a downhill skier, she began racing mountain bikes in the early Nineties. Her main discipline was downhill, though she did race some dual slalom and XC events too. She retired from racing in 2003.

**Az** Missy was one of the most successful DH riders ever, with 11 World Cup wins, two World Cup overall titles and a win at the '94 World Champs in Vail, Colorado. She raced for Yeti before signing to the Volvo Cannondale team, then Global Racing and Foes. She still talks about returning to racing.

**Az** Missy was known for her eccentric personality and wild look. She famously



wore the dried body of her pet piranha, Gonzo, on a necklace while racing and rocked motocross kit while most racers were still in skinsuits. Her riding style was pretty wild too!

**Az** Missy was never one to let injuries stop her racing. In 2001 she raced the

World Champs after dislocating her shoulder and knocking herself out during practice. In her race run she had a massive over-the-bars and suffered a brain haemorrhage that put her out of action for months – though she did return to win more World Cups the next year.

**Az** In 2009 Missy was caught transporting marijuana across America. After pleading guilty in court, she was landed with six months of house arrest and five years of strict parole. She admits to being someone who always has and always will live life on the edge!

pg 166

# 6



### SECOND COACH

## LEAN MORE, CORNER FASTER!

If you want to carry more speed and stay off the brakes in corners, then you need to increase the angle at which you lean the bike

**2** Use your hips! Initiate the lean by turning your hips towards the exit of the corner. Your knees should point towards the exit too.

**3** Lean the bike more than your body, especially in corners where there's no supporting berm.

**4** A lot of riders push the bike away in corners instead of down. Keeping your elbows up will keep you over the bike instead of behind it.

**1** You can't lean the bike with straight arms. Lower your chest towards the handlebar in the corner so that your elbows are bent.





# THE BEST OF...

## CHELTENHAM

Once a popular retreat for well-heeled visitors, the spa town of Cheltenham is best known these days for the annual Gold Cup horse race and GCHQ's doughnut shaped spy base. But if you're interested in rooting out trails rather than spooks, there's some fantastic terrain right on the town's doorstep, from the downhill trails of Leckhampton Hill to the open expanses of Cleeve Common.



### THE LOCAL

**Charlie Williams** is

the perfect guy to extol the virtues of Cheltenham. Growing up with so much riding on his doorstep, Charlie spent his formative years riding and racing DH before embracing enduro, which he's heavily involved with, helping to run the Welsh Gravity Enduro Series ([www.welshgravityenduro.com](http://www.welshgravityenduro.com)).



### ACCOMMODATION

For a quirky stay try the Big Sleep Hotel ([www.thebigsleephotel.com](http://www.thebigsleephotel.com)) in the centre of town, which boasts a secure car park and bike storage. For something a little more rural, the Cheltenham Park Hotel ([www.thehotelcollection.co.uk](http://www.thehotelcollection.co.uk)) sits on the lower slopes of Leckhampton Hill. To camp, Cranham Scout Centre ([www.scoutcentre.org.uk](http://www.scoutcentre.org.uk)) offer a wide variety of options, but advance booking is advised.



### TRAILS

Leckhampton Hill has prime technical singletrack as well as great natural DH trails for experienced riders. Cleeve Hill, on the other side of town, offers the opportunity to get some miles in and explore this corner of the Cotswolds, with a couple of cracking descents. Further afield, but within riding distance of Cheltenham, is Cranham Woods, with some amazing singletrack if you know where to look.



### ENTERTAINMENT

If you're looking for a relaxing evening with some great ales you'll be spoiled for choice. The Sandford Park Ale House is a former CAMRA pub of the year, while The Beehive and Jolly Brew Master are more traditional drinking dens. John Gordons comes highly recommended if you like your wines and whiskeys, and for live music or something a little livelier try The Vine, The Strand or The Swan.



### FOOD

Again, Cheltenham doesn't disappoint on the food front. The Tavern ([thetaverncheltenham.com](http://thetaverncheltenham.com)) is one of my favourites, with one of the best burgers in town. If you're out on the trails, The Royal William ([www.royalwilliam.co.uk](http://www.royalwilliam.co.uk)) in Cranham is a great pub to enjoy a pint and some food in, and if you feel peckish after descending Cleeve Hill, head to The Royal Oak ([royal-oak-prestbury.co.uk](http://royal-oak-prestbury.co.uk)) in Prestbury.



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WITHOUT A WEIGHT  
PENALTY'**

**OLLY WILKINS**

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# ARTISAN OFF-ROADERS

The annual Bespoked show is a celebration of handmade bicycles, providing custom frame builders from around the world with a platform to exhibit their sometimes weird and mostly wonderful creations. With the show making a welcome return to Bristol, we headed down the road to check it out. Here are six of the custom mountain bikes that caught our eye...



## 1 FARRER CYCLES LOAMRANGER

This stunning 29er was made in Rob Farrer's workshop in North Yorkshire from Reynolds 631 steel. Fancy a custom frame of your own? Prices start from £800. [www.farrercycles.co.uk](http://www.farrercycles.co.uk)

## 2 DEAR SUSAN 'MAD MAX' BIKE

This head-turning creation from Petor Georgallou is a work in progress – an all-terrain tourer designed around a Pinion gearbox. Check out that head angle! <http://dearsusan.co.uk>

## 3 PETER CHARNAUD FULL-SUSSER

It's not every day that you see a wooden bike, let alone a wooden full-suspension bike, but that's what we have here. This four-bar linkage frame was skilfully crafted by its creator from walnut and London plane over the course of eight months. [www.woodenbikedotcom.wordpress.com](http://www.woodenbikedotcom.wordpress.com)

## 4 SWARF CYCLES SPLINE 29

Designed and built to order in Dorset, the Spline 29er

is intended for technical riding, thrashing descents and taking in the miles with a massive smile on your face. As well as attracting plenty of admiring glances for its sparkly cherry red paint job, it won the Best Off-Road Bicycle award at the show. Prices start at £840. [www.swarfcycles.co.uk](http://www.swarfcycles.co.uk)

## 5 AUTOMATIC CYCLES SUPERBEAST

Bristol-based frame builder John 'Shaggy' Ross, a former pro endurance racer and veteran of the

notoriously tough Iditarod Trail Invitational and Mavic Trans-Provence, created this extra-small pink fatbike for his wife, Mel. Prices start from £750, with fatbikes costing around £1,000. [www.automaticcycles.com](http://www.automaticcycles.com)

## 6 CURTIS AM7

Legendary UK frame builders Curtis have been making custom mountain bikes for years and this beauty, their new 650b all-mountain hardtail, is another fine example of radness from the South West. Prices start at £845 f.o. [www.curtisbikes](http://www.curtisbikes)

## KNOW YOUR BIKE

UNLOCKING THE TECHNICAL JARGON TO EXPLAIN HOW OUR BIKES WORK

## TYRE TYPES

### Hardpack

Hardpack tyres have a shallow tread and are made from relatively hard rubber compounds to keep rolling resistance low. They tend to have a fairly round profile too.



### Intermediate

Intermediate tyres have a more aggressive tread pattern to help them fight for grip when the trail gets loose, usually featuring ramped knobs with square edges on the rear to aid rolling resistance yet still provide good grip under braking. Big side knobs for improved cornering make the tyre's profile on the rim a lot squarer. A lot of intermediate tyres use a mix of rubber compounds, with softer rubber on the edges for grip and harder rubber in the centre to cut rolling resistance.



### Mud

Mud tyres have tall, aggressive knobs. They usually come in narrower widths than hardpack and intermediate tyres, making for an even squarer profile. This helps them cut through deep mud. Soft rubber compounds increase grip even further.







THANK GOD FOR...

## LOCK-ON GRIPS

**PUSH-ON GRIPS** can be a pain to fit and remove, as well having the 'throttle grip' issue in rainy weather, when they can spin around on the handlebar. ODI came out with the first lock-ons in late 1998 and they heralded a revolution in mountain bike grips. You could reuse the lock-on clamps and the actual grips were replaceable and well worth the asking price.

It didn't take long before a whole heap of companies started jumping on the lock-on bandwagon, and nowadays we'd be shocked if a high-end bike sported anything but lock-ons (apart from maybe ESI silicone grips).

Recently, companies have adopted the design of just a single lock-on clamp on the inside of the grip, allowing the rider to rest their hand on the outer edge of the grip without any hindrance. ODI's AG1s – the signature grips of US downhill star Aaron Gwin – are a great example of this type of lock-on. ⚙️

## FLASHBACK

### MID '90S WHERE IT STARTED

**IT TOOK A** few years for DH racers to adopt full-face helmets – they used to add motocross goggles and clip-on face masks to regular XC lids – but when they did, Troy Lee Designs' Edge ruled the roost. Made by Japanese motorcycle helmet manufacturer Shoei, the MTB-specific Edge was the first of its kind and featured a removable chin guard, not unlike that found on the new Bell Super 2R enduro lid.



## THAT WAS THEN THIS IS NOW!

### #54 Downhill helmets

### 2015 HIGH-TECH SAFETY

**WITH DH TRACKS** and bike park trails now faster, gnarlier and featuring ever bigger jumps, helmets have had to move with the times. Advanced materials and manufacturing techniques mean the latest DH lids are in effect scaled down motocross helmets, offering high levels of protection but lighter and better vented. Troy Lee lids are still up there on podiums, along with the likes of Bell, Fox and 100%.



## TRAIL TUCKER

Our favourite post-ride treats from the UK's top riding spots

### #1 Sponge cakes, Forest of Dean

At a bacon sarnie fuelled trail centre it's easy to overlook the sweet treats, but thanks to cake baker extraordinaire Pat, the sponges at the Pedalabikeaway cafe are now really special. In fact, we'd go so far as to say they redefine the post-ride cake stop! Whether it's a filled lemon cake or classic Victoria sponge that tickles your fancy, it'll leave you in a state of cake-sated bliss.







## Going the Extra Mile

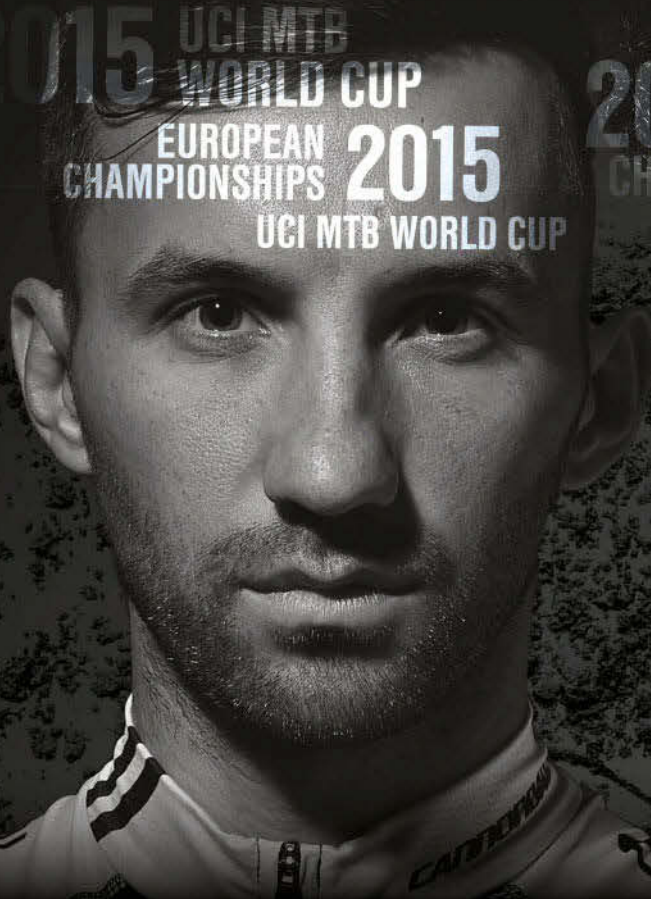
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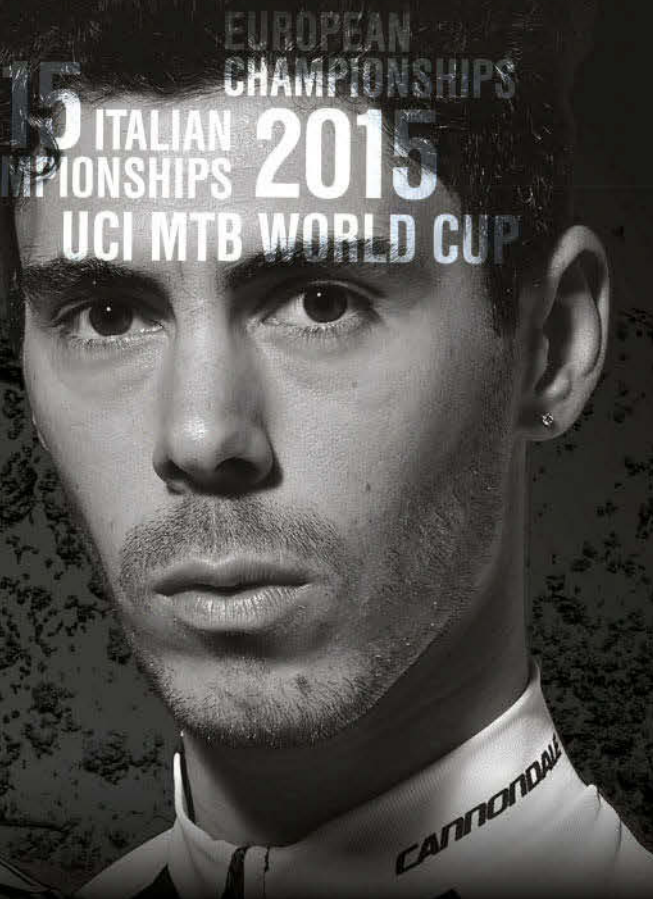


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Photo: Doc Ward

# LIVING THE DREAM

INSPIRATIONAL STORIES FROM THOSE WHO'VE SUCCESSFULLY TURNED MOUNTAIN BIKING INTO MORE THAN JUST A HOBBY

## Lee & Vicky Regan, invisifRAME

It's heartbreaking when a shiny new bike is reduced to a scarred mess after a few ill-fated encounters with car racks and rocks. With 15 years' experience in the automotive industry, Lee Regan, along with his wife Vicky, saw a gap in the market for a bespoke clear vinyl wrap to protect your bike from the elements. Over to them...

**We offer a solution to the age old problem of protecting your bike without compromising the finish.** We have polyurethanes to suit different frame finishes and help maintain the original look of the bike regardless of the conditions.

**It all started with a midlife crisis six years ago, when I bought myself a very nice bike.** I was so pleased with it that I didn't know whether to ride it or put it up on the living room wall. Feeling a little bit precious about keeping it looking good, and with access to automotive vinyl, I painstakingly hand-cut some shapes to go around the frame and components. Because the shapes fitted perfectly, they disappeared on to the frame. When I took the bike in for its six-week service, the manager of the shop noticed the kit and asked where I'd got it from.

**The biggest challenge in the first two years was working every hour running invisifRAME alongside my full-time job, while also trying to find time to ride and spend time with my young family.**

With any start-up you have lots of doubts and come across lots of doubters, which makes for many sleepless nights. You can't put into words the feeling of exhaustion. It takes a lot of hours and commitment to get a business up and running, let alone pay the bills.

**We've had no choice but to grow our business organically because it takes a lot of time to create each kit and build a collection.** We've built a brand based on quality products, from our designs to the materials we use, to the support we offer to customers and shops. Five years in we haven't placed any major adverts but reviews of our kits have prompted some amazing responses.

**We've lost count of all the products we've made.** We have an archive of discontinued models and are adding to the collection of 2015 frames and accessory kits every week. We do have a set of generic products, but the custom kits are what we went into this business for. They offer the best solution to frame protection.

**Creating new kits is a timely process, taking up to 12 hours, especially with all the massive carbon frames now coming on the market.** Designing a new

kit takes a lot of thought and patience – the fitting is the easy bit. We have an easy-to-follow application guide plus great customer feedback, and most of the shops we supply offer a fitting service too.

With any start-up you have lots of doubts and come across lots of doubters, which makes for many sleepless nights

**We're filming some short videos explaining how to install our products, just as extra support to show how straightforward it is.** They'll be on our website soon. We're also adding a range of new generic kits, which will be available soon. You'll see more of us this year because we plan to start advertising and also have a great network of supported riders out on the trails flying the invisifRAME flag for 2015. We have some big changes going on behind the scenes too, with new staff and premises on the horizon.

**With many hurdles to jump and hours upon hours of hard work, you have to believe in what you're doing when you set up your own business.** Thankfully there are some exciting moments to enjoy alongside the testing ones. Thanks to everyone who supports invisifRAME!





#### HIDEY HOLE

Hidden under the bottle cage on the carbon Stumpies (like the 650b S-Works seen here) is a SWAT storage port with space for a tube, CO<sub>2</sub>, canister, jacket and food



New for  
2015

# SPECIALIZED GO HALF FAT

*Three new Stumpjumper, plus trail lid, pads, SWAT gear and dropper post*

Specialized have revised their Stumpjumper FSR trail bike range for 2015, with the 650b and 29er versions both getting updates and the carbon models receiving the most attention. The big news, though, is the addition of a third wheel size option – 650b+, or as Spesh are calling the new standard, ‘6 fatty’.

From a ride point of view, the biggest change to the 650b and 29er bikes is a new back end that’s stiffer than before despite the seatstay bridge being removed to keep the chainstays nice and short – 420mm and 435mm, respectively. Combined with the relatively long and slack geometry, this is designed to give both bikes a fast, stable yet playful feel.

Secreted beneath the bottle cage on the carbon Stumpies is a SWAT storage port. Lift the cage and you’ll

find space inside the down tube for a tube, CO<sub>2</sub> canister, jacket and food. Spesh admit front triangle stiffness is marginally compromised, but say that with the new back end, decent axle-to-axle stiffness is maintained.

While RockShox forks (Pikes and Revelations) feature across the 29er and 650b ranges, Specialized have continued their partnership with Fox on the shocks, with all the bikes getting the new RX damper with a custom tune. The 650b bike continues to offer 150mm (5.9in) of travel, while the 29er has 140mm (5.5in) up front and 135mm (5.3in) out back.

As you’d expect, there’s plenty of Specialized own-brand kit on the bikes, from the handlebars to the super-wide Roval wheels. With an internal width of either 29mm or 30mm, these give the own-brand Butcher and Purgatory tyres a wider,

squarer stance on the rim, giving masses of grip. The top-end S-Works bikes get carbon Traverse SL Fattie wheels, while the rest roll on aluminium hoops.

With the Stumpjumper FSR 6 Fatty, Specialized have taken things one step further, mounting 3in tyres on the 30mm rims. The bike has wider clearances to match courtesy of the new ‘Boost’ standard, with a 12x148mm hub out back and a 15x110mm hub bolted into Fox’s new 34 Float 27.5+ fork up front. Specialized sell the idea by saying that the 6 Fatty is the bike for riders looking for maximum grip, whereas the 29er is for speed and the 650b for fun. Running the tyres at super-low pressures should give acres of grip on dry, loose, rocky trails, and because you can get away with a less aggressive tread, they should roll faster than you might expect.





#### FATBIKE LITE

The 650b+ Stumpy is all about grip – its massive 27.5x3in tyres produce an overall wheel diameter similar to that of a 29er but with way more traction



#### BIG-WHEELER

The 29er version of the bike is all about speed and long days in the hills – but knowing Spesh, it'll still be a heap of fun to ride

## Supersize me?

“The emergence of plus-size wheels, whether that's 650b+ (2.8-3in tyre on wide 650b rim) or 29+ (3in tyre on wide 29er rim), means more choice for riders, but more confusion too. While fatbikes (4in tyre on super-wide 26in rim) tend to feel very different from trail bikes, these 'half fat' models ride relatively normally. Specialized's maxim of '+' for grip, 29in for speed and 650b for fun isn't a bad way to look at it – if you ride rough, loose terrain a lot, a plus-size bike might not be a bad shout.

While some companies, such as Charge, are going full bore down the path of plus-size wheels, for

most brands they'll just be another option in the range. Plus-size wheels aren't going to replace 650b or 29in any time soon.

Having ridden a few plus-size bikes, we're less sceptical than we were when the concept was first mooted. While we wouldn't choose to race cross-country on one, they don't feel as sluggish as you might expect, and if you get the tyre pressures right there's loads of grip on offer. But that's the gripe – tyre pressure has to be right. Too low and the rubber rolls around on the rim, too high and the tyres ping off everything. Around 14 to 15psi seems to be the sweet spot so far.” – **Tom Marvin**, Technical Editor for our sister magazine, *What Mountain Bike*



## Accessories

### AMBUSH HELMET, £120

Specialized's new Ambush helmet is designed for hard and fast trail riding, with extended coverage at the rear that should provide extra protection in the event of a crash, as should the aramid skeleton that reinforces the multi-density EPS foam liner.

That big peak up front has ample adjustment – set low down it'll keep sun and rain out of your eyes, while it can also be shifted up to make room for your 'so enduro' goggles. Specialized's 4th Dimension ventilation system is among the best in the industry, while the new Mindset360 fit system is designed to accommodate as many head shapes as possible. Oh, and it looks pretty tidy too – always a bonus.

### ATLAS PADS, £60

These light, breathable and thinly padded knee pads are designed for all-day comfort, which should make them a popular choice out on the trails.

### SWAT BIB SHORTS, £TBC

Specialized's SWAT shorts let you ditch your pack and load up your bibs instead. This year, their pro-level chamois makes an appearance for even more comfort.

### COMMAND POST IRCC, £250

With 10 points of adjustment, the latest version of Spesh's cable-actuated dropper post adds even more saddle height tailoring options, along with 'stealth' internal routing.





# WIN!

## MONDRAKER FOXY XR & WITTER BIKE RACK

**WORTH UP  
TO £3,800!**

The Mondraker Foxy XR is a benchmark trail bike that's setting trends with its radical but carefully thought out new-school geometry. The combination of a longer than usual front end with a super-short stem results in a bike that's ultra-stable at speed but offers lightning-fast handling to help you shred steep sections and conquer rough, gnarly tracks. Coupled with Mondraker's Zero Suspension system, which is claimed to eliminate pedal feedback, power loss and brake jack, the result is a bike that can go everywhere and do it all at speed, with ease.

Retailing at £3,199, the Foxy XR won our sister magazine *What Mountain Bike's* 2014 Trail Bike Of The Year award and was a finalist in 2015's competition, and now Mondraker's UK



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WITTER

TOWBAR SYSTEMS





distributors, **Silverfish UK**, have one to give away to a lucky *MBUK* reader.

And that's not all – to go with the bike, **Witter Towbars** will be providing a bike rack of the winner's choosing from their versatile ZX500 range. Worth up to £600 and capable of carrying up to four bikes, this sturdy and easy-to-use towbar-mounted rack is the perfect way to get your new ride safely to the trails.

For a chance to win this great prize, all you have to do is answer two questions spread over the next two issues of *MBUK* and submit each answer on the competition page on Silverfish UK's website. It really is that easy! The first question is printed below and the second will appear in issue 318, in shops on June 26. So get your thinking caps on for a chance to win a top-spec trail bike and a feature-packed car rack!



### Question 1

**What is the name of Mondraker's groundbreaking geometry system?**

- A. Forward Geometry
- B. Zero Geometry
- C. Backward Geometry

### Enter here

[www.silverfish-uk.com/NewsDetail/151990/MBUK-Mondraker-Competition](http://www.silverfish-uk.com/NewsDetail/151990/MBUK-Mondraker-Competition)  
Or visit the Silverfish home page: [www.silverfish-uk.com](http://www.silverfish-uk.com)



**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** Promoter: Silverfish UK Limited, Units 3B & 3C Woodacre Court, Sallash Parkway Industrial Estate, Burraton Road, Sallash, Cornwall, PL12 6LY. The winner will be drawn at random from a list of entrants who correctly answer both questions presented in *MBUK* magazine. One question will be presented in issue 317 and a second presented in issue 318. It will be obvious if the question presented is question 1 or question 2. Answers must be submitted on the competition page on Silverfish UK Limited's website ([www.silverfish-uk.com/NewsDetail/151990/MBUK-Mondraker-Competition](http://www.silverfish-uk.com/NewsDetail/151990/MBUK-Mondraker-Competition)). Entrants must answer all relevant questions and enter all details correctly on the form. Entries will be accepted until the close of the competition at 23:59 BST on 24 July 2015. The winner will be drawn and contacted by email on or before 23:59 BST on 31 July 2015 and announced after he or she responds and accepts the prize. A response must be received within 10 days of the competition closing or a new winner will be chosen. Entrants must be 16 years or older and not employees of Immediate Media Company Limited, Silverfish UK Limited, Witter Towbars Limited or Elvira Marketing Services, or family thereof. The competition is open only to residents of the UK. The prize consists of a 2015 Mondraker Foxy 3R bicycle worth £3,199.00 (winner chooses size) plus a Witter towbar-mounted cycle carrier from the ZX500 range (winner chooses model) worth from £415.20 to £600. It is possible the Mondraker bicycle offered will be out of stock in the chosen size. In this event the bicycle supplier – Silverfish UK Limited – may offer any other Mondraker bicycle of a similar value. If there are no other bicycles suitable for the prize winner, there may be a delay of delivery until the 2016 Mondraker Foxy XR becomes available. Delivery time for these bicycles is not known at time of going to print. There is no cash alternative. The winner will be announced on the competition entry page and Silverfish UK Limited's Facebook and Twitter pages. Full terms and conditions are available on the competition entry page.



► BRENDAN FAIRCLOUGH



# NO SHORTCUTS

It's not just what you see the moment you need to be at your best, it's that you were passionate enough to spend years of moments chewing up dirt to get there.



# SEND IT!

YOUR MAIL,  
PHOTOS, IDEAS  
AND RANTS



**CONTACT US:** Write to: MBUK Send it! Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol, BS1 3BN  
Email: [mbuk@bikeradar.com](mailto:mbuk@bikeradar.com) Visit: [www.BikeRadar.com/mbukforum](http://www.BikeRadar.com/mbukforum)

## ★ MBUK STAR LETTER



I'm 17, I've just passed my driving test and I'm the new owner of a 1.1! Citroën Saxo. I'm free, finally! After saving up to fix my neglected bike (this driving business has me totally spent out) I strap it on to the back of the car and head to the woods.

The first descent is exhilarating! I remember just how good it is to be out – just you, the bike and an endless number of trails. The bike is riding so well, and although my legs are burning up I'm raring for more. The trail pixies have been at work and I find myself sending it off drops and exploring new twisting trails down the hillside. Oh boy, how I've missed riding. A few crashes and



Britain has world-class natural trails, like this one on Exmoor – all yours to explore

a whole load of smiling later, the view of hills rolling down towards the coastline is the perfect way to end the ride.

I know this summer will be amazing. Having a car will make trail exploring a breeze, I'll finally be able to help dig some trails and I'm sure there'll be many epic

trips across the country. Bring it on!

**JACQ GANT, VIA EMAIL**

*Ah, the freedom granted by your first car. Just don't let the sex, drugs and rock'n'roll of your new motor-assisted life distract you from what's really important – bikes, of course!*



If your letter gets picked as the Star Letter, you'll receive a pair of DMR Vault pedals worth £99.99, courtesy of Upgrade ([www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk)). For full Mountain Biking UK terms and conditions, see p14.



Proof that the work ethic is still alive and well – we look forward to Toby and Theo's next project!

## Eye of the beholder

My friend Theo and I started making a small bike track in our village a couple of years ago. We've had fun shredding and crashing, and we've just finished making a little tabletop jump – it's epic! Making these trails has made us good trail builders (we hope). Now we almost enjoy building trails as much as riding them.

Unfortunately, someone from the village has complained about how the track looks. To us it looks great. What do you think – do MTB trails only look good to mountain bikers?

**TOBY AND THEO (AGE 12), YORKSHIRE DALES**

Don't worry about the NIMBY brigade – if you weren't building trails they'd be getting their geriatric undergarments in a twist about you kicking footballs into their gardens or some other such nonsense! Your track looks pretty fun to us. »





## SOCIAL STUFF

### @ MBUK FORUM

www.bikeradar.com/  
forums

#### Tips on blocking the sensible voice in my head stopping me riding a big jump?

Follow someone else into it? Close your eyes?  
– **paul.skibum**

Abuse and peer pressure might help  
– **RockmonkeySC**

As you get older, your brain overtakes bravado  
– **robertpb**

Watch other riders and when the first crashes decide maybe it's not for you – **WindyG**

If there's any doubt in your mind, don't do it  
– **Ferrais**

### f FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/  
MBUKMag

#### Favourite summer trail conditions?

Loose loam makes me happy – **Adam Williams**

I'm on Scotland's west coast so I just want a few trails where I don't need a face mask and snorkel  
– **Tim Watkins**

Mud. More fun!  
– **Alex Smith**

Don't mind. It's just nice to not have to wash your bike down after every ride  
– **Mark Pulleyn**

### TWITTER

http://twitter.com/  
mbukmagazine

#### Best bike colour?

Got to be Yeti turquoise  
– **@TransAlpUK**

You can't beat a bit of stealth with some standout parts  
– **@AndyPinder**

Bright neon – **@afarmfl**

Red, it's faster  
– **@BeardyBoulderer**

#### The small print

Email your letters and photos to [mbuk@bikeradar.com](mailto:mbuk@bikeradar.com).

- The 'Star Photo' winner will receive a Lezyne CNC Dirt Floor Drive pump worth £89.99.
  - The 'That's Gotta Hurt' winner will receive a Lezyne Port A Shop toolkit worth £99.99.
  - The 'Hardcore Heroes' winner will receive an Effetto Mariposa Caffelatex Tubeless Conversion Kit worth £49.99.
- Turn to p14 for full Mountain Biking UK terms and conditions.

## Antisocial app

What happened to the Sunday morning ride, when there was time to take a breather, have a laugh and pose for a silly group photo, all followed by a big fry-up out of the back of Stevie's van? Now it's all about going flat out from the trailhead, going for a PB or KOM on one of the thousands of imaginary segments created by Strava addicts. Come on guys, you know who you are – leave the phone in the bag for emergencies and let's get back to social cycling for at least one ride a month!

**MARK STAINSBY**, VIA EMAIL  
We've heard the Strava app blamed for many things – reckless riding, corner cutting, exposure of 'secret' trails. But killing the post-ride fry-up? Now it's gone too far!

## Budget biking

I thought I'd share my ride with you as proof that the pleasures of mountain biking aren't reserved for the wealthy. My Norco Scrambler was purchased at my local Cash Converters for just £99.99. After two weeks' hard work and £100 of extras, she's now back to her former glory and ready to be ridden in the Chilterns. Great magazine, guys – keep up the good work and keep those pedals turning!  
**KERRIN CONNETT**, DUNSTABLE, BEDFORDSHIRE  
Nice work, Kerrin. We'd recommend swapping out that adjustable stem as soon as you can though – they're generally not designed with rocky downhills in mind, and you don't want to end up using your face as a brake!



Kerrin's bargain Norco Scrambler



A gust of wind knocked **MARK ROWAN** off line as he was sending one of the jumps at Llandegla. Despite wearing elbow pads, the crash caused the end of his ulna bone to break off, pierce his skin and come to rest above his elbow joint, requiring major surgery and leaving Mark out of action for several months.

## WIN Lezyne tool package



**MATT MEREDITH** says: "This is at my first enduro event, doing my first ever drop. As you can see, there's a slight element of fear in my expression!" Pic by **MJP PHOTOGRAPHY**



**WILLY KING** from Cleator Moor in Cumbria captured this epic Lake District vista part way round Whinlatter's North Loop. Nice!



11-year-old **ARCHIE GILMOUR** gets some air on tabletops his dad built out the back of his house



Here's five-year-old **FIONN** from Wicklow, Ireland getting rad on his Giant XTC Junior. Pic by dad **NEIL**



# ★ MBUK STAR PHOTO



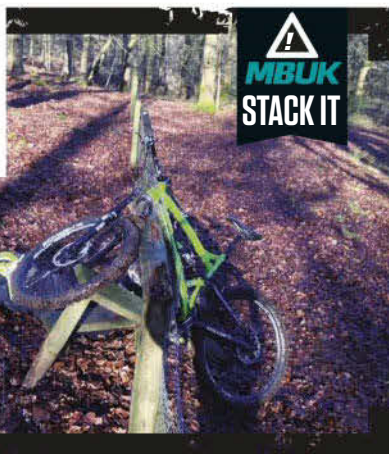
**JULIE RUTHERFORD** snapped this great shot of **GEORGE HUNTON** high up above the clouds in the Lake District. "He does well for an OAP!"



## WHAT YOU COULD WIN...

The Lezyne CNC Dirt Floor Drive track pump is made from durable CNC machined aluminium and has an oversized barrel, piston, hose and connectors to deliver twice as much air per stroke and quickly fill tyres or seat tubeless tyre systems. For more info, visit [www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk).

There's hitting the woods with style, and then there's hitting the wooden stile. An easy mistake to make, as **RICH PARKES** seems to have found out



## ! MBUK STACK IT

**JAMES WRIGHT** couldn't resist getting a snap of his mates popping wheelies at Curbar Edge in the Peak District



**MAX JAMES** nailing a rock drop on his local trail, Kamikaze, in Guisborough Forest on the edge of the North York Moors

## MBUK HARDCORE HERO



This month's prize goes to **DOUGLAS MILLER**, who sent this gap at his local woods in Elgin on his Commencal Supreme DH. Pic by his mate **LIAM ANDERSON**

## WIN Effetto tubeless kit



## TWEETS OF THE MONTH



Definitely spoilt this year with these two machines! Sheffield's

**Craig Evans** will be rolling in style on and off the DH track this year



Got these beauties all cleaned up and we're headed straight back to the dirt for a ride

tonight #ridewashrepeat **Aaron Gwin**'s also rolling in style this year. What is it with these DH racers?



#whipflipwednesday This jump was sick! #CruzFestboys killed it

**Kurt Sorge** sends it at the first round of the FEST Series in Santa Cruz, California. These guys are nuts!



Gareth Brewin has been wrestling with some rather large rocks on Hardline today! Digging

has officially started! The **Atherton Racing** crew are already in the diggers and creating another monster DH track



What a difference a few hours can make! Second ride of the day and this time

basking in sunshine Enduro and DH queen **Tracy Moseley** reflects on our bonkers British weather



## INSTAGRAM

<http://instagram.com/mbukmagazine>



@**darren\_gurney** with a trusting mate laying it on the line to get the shot



@**robo\_webb** gives his trail dog Stanley a turn steering the bike for a change



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AND SO THE OUTSIDE IT BASHES US IN, BASHES US ABOUT A BIT, FEEL IT TUGGING YOU, PLOUGHING YOU FLAT, THEN FEEL IT FILLING YOUR SAILS AND WARM ON YOUR BACK



WINT SAUCE





**AARON GWIN**  
2-time UCI World Cup Downhill Champion



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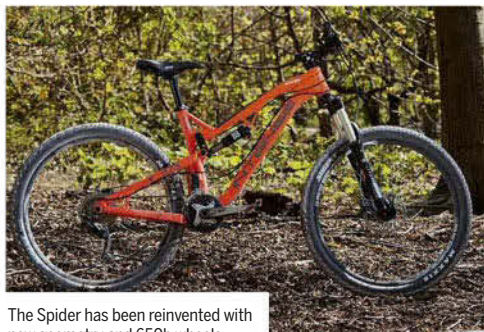


THE 67-DEGREE HEAD ANGLE AND SHORT  
CHAINSTAYS SET OUT THE HOOLIGAN  
INTENTIONS OF THE SPIDER EARLY ON



# FirstRides <sup>MBUK</sup>

**FEATURING:** Intense Spider 275 Foundation Build // On-One 45650b SRAM X01 // Trek Slash 7



The Spider has been reinvented with new geometry and 650b wheels



The X-Fusion O2 shock lacks mid stroke support when pushed hard

## INTENSE SPIDER 275 FOUNDATION BUILD

**FRAME** Hydroformed alloy, 115-130mm (4.5-5.1in) travel **FORK** X-Fusion Sweep RL, 130mm (5.1in) travel **SHOCK** X-Fusion O2 RL **DRIVETRAIN** Shimano SLX w/ Deore front mech (2x10) **WHEELSET** SUNringlé Inferno wheels, Maxxis Ardent 27.5x2.25in tyres **BRAKES** Shimano M506 **BAR/STEM** Intense Recon, 740mm/Intense, 70mm **SEATPOST/SADDLE** Intense/WTB Silverado Sport **WEIGHT** 14.4kg (31.7lb), medium with pedals **PRICE** £2,999.99 (complete bike) **CONTACT** Extra UK [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)

### FirstRides Ratings

WE BASE OUR SCORES ON VALUE FOR MONEY AND PERFORMANCE



**EXCEPTIONAL:**  
A genuine class leader



**VERY GOOD:** One of the best you can buy



**GOOD:** It'll do the job and do it well



**BELOW AVERAGE:**  
Flawed in some way



**POOR:** Simply put, don't bother!

Intense are known as a big-money boutique brand, so when they announced the launch of their new, cheaper Foundation Build complete bikes we couldn't wait to see how they performed. The Spider frame has been updated for 2015 too, with a change to 650b wheels and drastically revised geometry and suspension.

### The frame

Despite the Foundation Build moniker, Intense haven't skimped as far as the frame is involved. The alloy construction is of Intense's usual handmade-in-the-USA quality and ticks all the standard boxes for a 130mm (5.1in) travel trail frame. There's a 12x142mm axle out back, a 44mm head tube – which will accept forks with tapered or straight steerer tubes – and internal routing for a remote-operated 'stealth' dropper post. Grease ports on the linkages keep the rear end running smoothly.

As for geometry, the 67-degree head angle and short 419mm chainstays set out the

hooligan intentions of the Spider early on.

### The kit

At three grand, the Spider isn't cheap for a bike with a budget build kit. X-Fusion's Sweep RL fork is matched to their O2 shock out back, the 2x10 drivetrain is mainly Shimano SLX, so reliability won't be an issue, and SUNringlé provide the wheelset, which is shod with Maxxis Ardent tyres. The bar and stem are both own-brand jobs, as is the seatpost. The lack of a dropper post is a sticking point on a bike at this price.

### The ride

Jumping on the Spider, it's obvious the frame is intended to be ridden hard. The slack (for a bike of this travel) head angle and short chainstays combine snappy handling with enough stability for the ride to remain fun, though the 70mm stem and narrow 740mm bar prevent you making the most of the frame's aggressive potential.

Some more weaknesses in the spec started to show up on

high-speed technical descents, with the lateral flex of the wheels paired with the thin sidewalls of the Ardent tyres making it difficult to stay on line at times. The fork and shock aren't particularly supple and they also lack mid-stroke support when pushed hard. Admittedly we were riding the Spider pretty aggressively for a 130mm trail bike, but it's a shame that the kit lets the bike down when the frame seems happy to be ridden in a rowdy fashion.

On the climbs, the Spider pedals well in both chainrings, even with 35 per cent sag out back. The non-dropper post at least has a QR clamp, and the lockouts on the fork and shock are very effective, though we didn't feel the need to use them on our rides. **JAKE**

### FirstRides <sup>RATED</sup>

Basic spec takes away some of the hard-riding ability of the solid and capable frame, but the Spider retains a fun feel







↑ On-One's latest steel hardtail handles pretty well, especially on fast descents

↓ The 140mm RockShox Revelation fork is more than capable enough for the frame



## ON-ONE 45650B SRAM X01



**FRAME** DN6 triple/double-butted chromoly **FORK** RockShox Revelation RL, 140mm (5.5in) travel **DRIVETRAIN** SRAM X1 cranks, SRAM X01 shifter and rear mech, MRP 1x upper chain guide (1x11) **WHEELSET** SRAM ROAM 30 wheels, Maxxis Ardent EXO 27.5x2.4in (F) and 27.5x2.25in (R) tyres **BRAKES** SRAM Guide RSC **BAR/STEM** On-One Knuckleball, 747mm/El Guapo Corto, 45mm **SEATPOST/SADDLE** RockShox Reverb/On-One Bignose Evo **WEIGHT** 12.5kg (27.6lb), 18in without pedals **PRICE** £1,599.99 (complete bike) **CONTACT** On-One [www.on-one.co.uk](http://www.on-one.co.uk)

**O**n-One's 456 steel hardtail has been around for a while, but this latest version gets bigger 650b wheels and an 11-speed SRAM transmission in a bid to bolster its trail credentials.

### The frame

The straight, uncomplicated, triple and double-butted tubes used to build the 45650b have been neatly welded together to create a frame that's more than

happy to accommodate a long-travel (as far as hardtails go) fork, with angles that certainly lean towards aggressive riding and trail razzing fun.

The 44mm head tube and 30.9mm seat tube will happily host the majority of forks and dropper seatposts, though sadly there's no internal routing for a 'stealth' post. The threaded 73mm bottom bracket shell is surrounded by ISCG tabs, and asymmetrical chainstays and wishbone seatstays meet at a quick-release 10x135mm rear axle.

### The kit

We opted for the pricier SRAM X01 build but there is a SRAM X9 build for £600 less. Included alongside the ever-impressive 11-speed transmission (actually a mix of X01 and X1 kit) are SRAM's Guide RSC brakes, ROAM 30 wheels, RockShox Reverb post and Revelation fork, in 140mm (5.5in) travel

guise. We really liked the own-brand Knuckleball bar too.

### The ride

There's definitely an element of feeling perched on top of the 45650b, especially when you start slinging it into turns on mellower bits of singletrack. We had to slam the stem as low as we could on the fork steerer to drop the bar height, but even then, it still felt quite high. It's also hard to ignore the 320mm bottom bracket height, which, even with a 140mm fork, is quite tall. You could drop the fork travel to lower the BB, but that would also steepen the head angle, which, at its current 67 degrees, feels pretty good when pointed downhill.

The high BB means it takes time to build confidence in the turns. On the plus side, we never snagged a pedal when putting the power down on tree stump riddled off-piste sections. Our 18in frame felt

roomy enough in the cockpit on the climbs and the wide gear range and reasonable overall weight meant that winning the 45650b up to the top of the hill was always a comfortable affair.

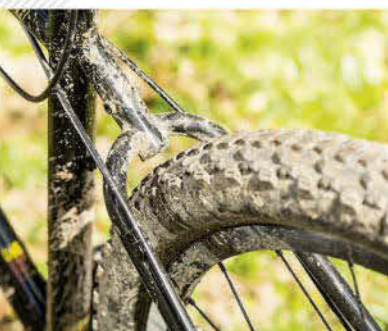
Get the On-One pointed down steep, technical trails and confidence levels soon creep back up, thanks in part to that high front end, wide bar and short stem. It's easy to manhandle the bike up and over trail obstacles at speed, and even in the air it feels reassuringly stable. The 140mm Revelation fork – even if it is a little flexy – lets you sit back and clatter down choppy, badly worn trail centre descents as fast as you're happy to go.

The back end can feel quite unforgiving after a long stint in the saddle though, especially on really battered surfaces. We'd fit a wider, higher volume tyre at the rear to add a little more cushioning, and a front tyre with a bit more bite. **ROB**



## FirstRides **RATED**

A great spec and solid ride feel add to the 45650b's appeal but there's still room for improvement



↑ The skinny wishbone seatstays give a decent amount of mud clearance out back




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**MATT JONES**

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PHOTO / LAURENCE CROSSMAN-EMMS

SARACLEN.CO.UK /  FACEBOOK.COM/SARACENBIKES /  TWITTER.COM/SARACENBIKES

SPORTLINE







↑ The sorted frame design and excellent suspension translate to a top ride

↓ The RockShox shock delivers better performance than Trek's DRCV dampers



## TREK SLASH 7

**FRAME** Alpha Platinum aluminium, 160mm (6.3in) travel **FORK** RockShox Pike RC, 160mm (6.3in) travel **SHOCK** RockShox Monarch Plus R DebonAir **DRIVETRAIN** SRAM X7 w/ X9 rear mech and S1200 crankset (2x10) **WHEELSET** Bontrager Duster Elite wheels, Bontrager XR4 Expert 27.5x2.35in tyres **BRAKES** Shimano Deore **BAR/STEM** Bontrager Rhythm Elite, 750mm/Bontrager Rhythm Comp, 60mm **SEATPOST/SADDLE** Bontrager Rhythm Elite/Bontrager Evoke 2 **WEIGHT** 14kg (30.9lb), without pedals **PRICE** £2,500 (complete bike) **CONTACT** [www.trekbikes.com](http://www.trekbikes.com)

Trek's cheapest trail/enduro bike proves that if you get the basics right, you don't need a ton of bling to build an enjoyable and impressively capable ride.

### The frame

The Slash follows Trek's proven suspension template. The rear pivots rotate on the same axis as the 142x12mm axle and the shock is squeezed between a

rocker linkage and extended chainstay tips. There are ISCG mounts, a down tube guard and a linkage chip that lets you drop the BB by 8mm and slacken the angles by 0.6 degrees.

It's significant that the Slash uses a standard single-chamber shock – a RockShox Monarch Plus with the new DebonAir sleeve – rather than the proprietary twin-chamber Trek/Fox DRCV dampers of the

140mm Remedy and 120mm Fuel EX. It also uses a different shaped Evo Link rocker.

### The kit

The RockShox shock is matched with their excellent Pike RC fork to give 160mm (6.3in) of travel at both ends. The mixed SRAM X9/X7 2x10 transmission is OK for the money, Bontrager's tubeless-ready wheels and tyres strike a reasonable balance between speed and control, the cockpit is well shaped and Shimano's Deore brakes always impress. The complete bike is fractionally lighter than the same priced, but shorter travel, Remedy 7.

### The ride

Unlike the Remedy, the Slash rides lighter than it looks. There is some pedal bob under power because the shock lacks the three-position compression damping of the pricier Monarch Plus RC3, but it doesn't mess

with traction or pedalling rhythm even when out of the saddle. The XR4 Expert tyres are more slippery in the wet than the pricier XR4 Teams, but tyre drift is just an excuse for the Slash to showcase the slide-sustaining balance and poise of its 65-degree head angle and long wheelbase.

Super-supple traction and excellent mid-stroke control from both dampers also amplifies control, whatever the terrain. Because the suspension is so sorted, with the Monarch Plus R proving way smoother and more predictable than the basic DRCV shocks on other Treks we've ridden, the lack of fancy adjustments is refreshing.

The Slash is gagging for a dropper post (there's internal routing for one) and has a short top tube and long stem by the latest DH-derived standards, but out on the trail the dimensions and dampers add up to a fantastic ride. **GUY**



↑ There's internal cable routing for a dropper post should you want to upgrade



## FirstRides

A great category-blurring blend of trail fast, black run beasting entertainment at a cost that normally creates compromise







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# MBUK First Look

*Tasty bits of new kit to  
get excited about*







## NORCO AURUM C7.3

**NORCO HAVE BEEN** working on this 650b reinvention of their Aurum downhill bike since 2012, and it saw action throughout the 2014 World Cup season under Jill Kintner and Bryn Atkinson. We were impressed by the performance of the top-end C7.1 bike at its launch earlier this year (see issue 315) so we're keen to see how this base model measures up, with the same carbon-fronted, 200mm (7.9in) travel frame but more affordable kit. This includes a RockShox Boxxer RC fork and Kage RC shock, SUNringlé Inferno wheels and dependable Shimano Zee stop/go equipment. Look out for a full review soon.

**£2,900** Evans Cycles [www.evanscycles.com](http://www.evanscycles.com)

## FIRST LOOK

## ADIDAS TERREX TRAIL CROSS SHOES

**DESIGNED FOR BOTH** hiking and biking, these shoes combine a fairly supple sole and lightweight upper with a tacky Stealth rubber outsole for maximum grip on the pedals. Yep, that's the same rubber used by Five Ten, who are now owned by Adidas. The flexible sole should mean good comfort and traction off the bike – whether you're tackling a treacherous hike-a-bike section or taking a casual stroll to the shops – as well as letting the shoes sink into the pedals slightly for improved feel and feedback. The Trail Crosses aren't as sturdy or pedalling-efficient as dedicated flat pedal shoes, but their versatility, grip and pedal feel could make them a good choice for beginners.

**£95** Adidas [www.adidas.co.uk](http://www.adidas.co.uk)





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## SANTA CRUZ NOMAD CARBON C X1 AM

**AT JUST UNDER** five grand, the cheapest incarnation of Santa Cruz's carbon Nomad can't exactly be described as 'thrifty', but it is a full £800 cheaper than the higher-grade carbon CC version, despite sporting an impressively race-ready spec. The super-efficient VPP frame relies on a RockShox Monarch Plus DebonAir shock to provide consistent control of its 165mm (6.5in) of rear wheel travel, while a Pike RC fork takes care of the terrain up front. Combine this with a Rockshox Reverb dropper post and it's clear the Nomad is designed to tackle steep and technical descents. With its Enduro World Series race pedigree and a barely compromised spec sheet, this is one desirable machine.

**£4,799** Santa Cruz UK [www.santacruz bikes.co.uk](http://www.santacruz bikes.co.uk)

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## RACE FACE RIP STRIP AND STASH TANK

**DON'T WANT TO** wear a pack for a quick lap of the local trails? The Rip Strip 'lumbar belt' (bumbag) could be the answer, with three pockets that provide enough room for your phone, keys, multi-tool, tube and pump. It's capable of holding a small water bottle and essential rations too, and the svelte profile should keep sweat and discomfort to a minimum on those hard and fast rides. Also new from Race Face is the STASH Tank, a riding vest with space for a 1.5l hydration bladder (not included), complete with some neat routing for the hose. Stash pockets at the bottom of the vest provide enough room to wedge in some essential spares too. So enduro!

Stash Tank vest **£69.95**

Rip Strip bumbag **£39.95**

Silverfish [www.silverfish-uk.com](http://www.silverfish-uk.com)

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## ODI RUFFIAN SOFT PRO COMPOUND GRIPS

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**£21.99** Ison Distribution

[www.ison-distribution.com](http://www.ison-distribution.com)

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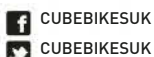
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# SuperBike

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**£555 Lapierre Zesty AM 927 Ultimate UK**



## WHY IS THIS A SUPER BIKE?

- With a spec chosen by Lapierre's UK distributors Hotlines, this bike is ready for a thrashing in our unique British riding conditions
- Aggressive geometry and 150mm of rear wheel travel means the carbon Zesty AM frame is the perfect base for a UK trail slayer
- Shimano's top-of-the-range XTR gearing is resistant to the elements as well as having the bling factor. Add RockShox suspension and a Reverb dropper post, and performance should be flawless

## The ultimate UK trail bike?

**A French bike dialled for British riding perfection...**

We have a very special way of riding our bikes on this little island that we call home, which mostly involves grinding up hills just to get to the downhill on the other side. This has helped make the UK the strongest nation in the world when it comes to gravity racing, but, combined with our wonderful

weather, it does mean that bikes equipped with kit chosen by product managers living in sunnier or more XC focused climes don't always live up to our expectations.

Enter Lapierre with the Zesty AM 927 Ultimate UK, which has been specced by the guys at Hotlines specifically for British riders

and features a mix of top-quality parts that should last well through the muddy abuse British riders are sure to dish out.

### Pursuit of perfection

The equipment list hasn't been picked by office workers either. The two spec





### SHARP LINES

The Zesty's lines are anything but blurred – the carbon frame has a clean, sleek design and internal cable routing to hide the rear brake hose, gear cable and dropper post hose from the elements. There are even well thought out blanking covers on the unused cable ports to stop water or dirt getting into the frame.

### WORLD-CLASS FINISH

Everything has been thought through, right down to the small details like the carbon headset cap and spacers. The saddle is a carbon-railed fi'zi:k Tundra and the hoses are even shortened to the perfect length to make for a real pro-looking set-up.

### ALL-WEATHER SOLUTIONS

Not content with offering a single set of tyres with the bike, Hotlines supply a set of WTB Vigilantes as well as the Mavic Quests that come with the wheels, giving one solution for dry weather – and another for most of the year. The Mavic wheels will survive whatever you can throw at them too.

### SINGLE RING

Hotlines have gone for a single-ring XTR set-up, with an e\*thirteen top guide to ensure dropped chains are a thing of the past. The XTR theme continues throughout the drivetrain, so shifting precision should be perfect.







#### **SPECIAL COCKPIT**

The 50mm Nico Vouilloz signature stem is made for Lapierre by Funn, and a special Lapierre branded Truvativ Blackbox bar rounds the cockpit off nicely at 750mm wide.

#### **ROCK OUT**

Hotlines' belief that RockShox offer the best overall suspension package has resulted in a Pike being bolted in up front and a Monarch RT3 out back. The Pike is the Solo Air model, so Bottomless Tokens can be used to fine tune the spring rate, while the Monarch is tuned for the frame.

artists, Martin Astley and Ed Ibbetson, both ride and race to a high level in downhill and enduro, so they're more than qualified to cherry-pick components that are perfect for the Zesty.

The bikes are built up by Lapierre in France and then sent over to the UK for Hotlines to keep in stock. "We were free to spec this bike however we wished, with no tie-in or allegiance to any supplier," says Ed, Lapierre's UK brand manager. "We feel that right now Shimano offer the best in shifting and brakes, and RockShox offer the best suspension performance."

A Pike fork up front is paired with a Monarch RT3 shock out back – both solid performers that are close to maintenance free and offer some of the best damping around. RockShox also supply the well proven Reverb Stealth dropper seatpost.


#### **Security is key**

The transmission is Shimano's new 11-speed XTR M9000, with a single 32-tooth chainring up front. The 11-40t cassette gives plenty of range for climbing anything we'll encounter in the UK, and the XTR ring and e\*thirteen TRS top guide mean you shouldn't ever drop the chain. "We've actually been running an XTR 1x11 set-up without a guide for three months now without dropping a chain, but this bike is likely to be raced and for a few extra grams the surety of a top guide is worth it in our eyes," Ed explains.

The Hotlines guys are big fans of the XTR brakes, so the new M9000 Trail models are bolted to the Zesty Ultimate, along with 180mm rotors front and rear for consistent stopping power. The levers fit in nicely on the 750mm wide Truvativ carbon bar, which is bolted into a 50mm Nico Vouilloz signature stem, made by Funn for Lapierre.

#### **Rolling thunder**

When it came to wheels, Mavic's Crossmax XLs were an obvious choice for this enduro weapon, with a "good blend of weight, strength and performance at a good price", according to the Hotlines crew. As well as the stock Mavic tyres, the Zesty Ultimate comes with a set of WTB Vigilantes, reinforcing its UK-ready credentials. As Martin, Hotlines' marketing manager, puts it: "Mavics for summer and the WTB Vigilantes for the other 365 days of the year!"

It's obvious that both Martin and Ed have put a lot of thought into everything on the bike and, being racers themselves, they know what works best in UK conditions. This level of spec integrity and attention to detail really does make this Zesty worthy of being called a Superbike. 

#### **THE ESSENTIALS**

**PRICE:** £5,399.99 (complete bike)

**CONTACT:** Hotlines UK [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**ALSO LOOK AT:** Mojo Geometron, from £5,200 (complete bike), [www.mojo.co.uk](http://www.mojo.co.uk)



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## FOREARMS

# 1

**Holding on to** a lump of metal and rubber as it attempts to smooth out rocks at 20mph requires forearms. Now, we're not saying we all look like Popeye, but, well, Chris Froome. That is all.



# 20 REASONS

# DIRT BE TARM

*The road riding boom's got a lot of people into cycling. Now we need to get them out on proper bikes! Here's why MTBing trounces road riding...* **Words** Ric McLaughlin **Illustrations** Stephen Harnwell Jones





# ATS AC

## 2 LESS LYCRA

**Let's face it,** man was not made to wear Lycra. These slithers of vein-hugging fabric may be designed to reduce drag but they also allow all and sundry to see every fold, crevice and ripple of your body. Aside from the obvious horror factor, Lycra is extremely expensive too, for all you get of it. Pro-level bib shorts cost around £200, which sort of puts that last pair of baggy shorts you guiltily bought online into perspective, doesn't it?!

## 3 TOTAL BODY WORKOUT

**Road cyclists are** a famously bandy bunch and their entire focus is upon dialing in their power-to-weight ratio. All that really matters are the legs and the mind's ability to drive them forward even when each one is laden with lactic acid. Mountain biking, by contrast, works the core and upper body too, as you manoeuvre the bike around and over obstacles, supporting your own weight in the process.





## LACK OF MANSCAPING

# 4

**Since the outbreak** of the London 2012 Olympics chemists have been fighting a losing battle – they can't keep razors on shelves. Scientists say that within 150 years the modern British man will actually have evolved to be completely body-bald\*. Even arms are getting shaved these days! Mountain bikers don't have to worry about such narcissistic preening – our sport is hairy and proud! (\*We've made this up.)





## 5 ACCESSIBLE RACING

**The Tour de France** is the world's biggest annual sporting event and attracts a TV audience of 44 million people. The problem with road cycling, though, is that you see a lot more of it on TV than you do standing by the roadside. Go to a UCI Downhill World Cup race and you have open access to wander up and down the track as you see fit. There aren't any blacked-out team buses, you can just approach your favourite rider in the pits before cheering them into the finish arena.

## 6 WALKING WITH DIGNITY

**Even the great** Alberto Contador can't get off his bike and walk into a pub and order pie and chips (or whatever the Spanish equivalent is) with any kind of poise. Massive plastic cleats and slick carbon soles mean roadies can't help but walk like goons.

## 7 TRICK KIT

**Road bikes are** cool things but their designers speak a fairly dull language of nibbling grams and vertical compliance. Mountain bikes are machines designed to go everywhere flat-out and utilise incredible technology like electronically-activated suspension to gobble up all you can throw at them. Road bikes are only just starting to adopt hydraulic disc brakes, whereas we've been using them for two decades.

## 8 JOSH BRYCELAND

**He mightn't know** it but Josh really does embody all that there is to love about mountain biking. He's funny, very funny. He's stylish, very, very stylish. And he wins big races. Of course, he puts the hours in down the gym and in training, but in any shot you see of Josh

riding he's always got a dirty big grin plastered from ear to ear. When was the last time you saw a roadie smile?!

## 9 CARS

**OK, so in** between trails mountain bikers may often share the roads with cars, but nowhere near as much as our road riding brethren. The problem isn't all motorists but rather the few who are content to pilot their large metal boxes at speed

## 11 DRIFTING

**With your weight** over the front wheel of your mountain bike you can enjoy a heavenly few seconds of ethereal arcing as your rear wheel breaks free and drifts majestically around a corner. Feel this sensation on a road bike and you can pretty much guarantee that the next thing you smell will be hospital food. Going sideways at speed has been a part of mountain biking since its birth back in

## 10 DRINKING BEER

**The refreshingly frothy** combination of hops, barley and water that we call 'beer' is a reward like no other. Whether you're in a pub garden, out the back of your house or just hanging out on a kerb somewhere, knocking back a beer is the universal symbol of bringing a great ride to a close. In road riding it'd probably just be seen as 'empty carbs' and ditched in favour of a barf-inducing recovery drink.

without due care or attention. At this year's Tour of Flanders, two of the racers were taken down by support cars there to service the bikes!

the mid Seventies on the gravelly slopes of Mount Tamalpais, California, and remains one of its finest attributes to this day.

**“Feel this sensation on a road bike and you can guarantee the next thing you smell will be hospital food”**

## IN FAIRNESS...

The top five things we'll admit envying the roadies for

**1 Bradley Wiggins**  
Although he's already on his farewell tour of the big road races, there's something achingly cool and quintessentially British about Sir Wiggo.

**2 Spring Classics**  
The ancient one-day races of western Europe are the monuments on which the road cycling season builds. More high level, early season MTB racing please!

**3 UCI Favouritism**  
The UCI love road cycling and seem to only be interested in placating mountain bikers. We want more infrastructure and more investment in young talent and event promotion.

**4 Big name sponsors**  
During the X Games 'extreme sports' boom of the Nineties the big brands came knocking at MTBing's door. Now it feels more like an 'industry only' affair.

**5 Electric shifting**  
This does now exist in mountain biking too, but blipping down the gears under braking on perfectly smooth asphalt is something every bike rider should experience.



An illustration of a cyclist in a green helmet and vest jumping over a jump. The cyclist is on a green mountain bike. In the background, there are stylized green trees and a black diagonal line. Below the cyclist, there is a large white number '12'.

## JUMPS

**Road bikes** are tougher than many give them credit for, but we still wouldn't want to get airborne on one. On a mountain bike, it's one of the most fun things you can do. Build up slowly, then start clearing bigger and bigger lips, and in no time at all you'll be a master of the air, soaring majestically like a (hairy) eagle over those left below.

# 12

**"In no time at all you'll be soaring majestically like a (hairy) eagle"**

## 13 LACK OF LANCE

**Tell somebody outside** of cycling that you're into road riding and start counting the seconds until they mention the name Lance Armstrong. The Texan super-fraud hangs over road cycling like a drugged up ghost who refuses to leave the party. He embodies everything that is and can be bad about professional sport yet his lies stay intrinsically linked to cycling in the public mind. Say you ride mountain bikes and, oddly enough, he won't come up... Simple.

## 14 FLAT PEDALS

**There's a reason** why some of the best roadies have a history of riding mountain bikes and that's the skill set that's ingrained from your first days riding dirt.

Flat pedals are a crucial place to start, and even if you've become a dyed-in-the-wool clipper-inner, sticking flats on once a year can't help but bring a massive smile to your face. The brilliantly simplistic feel may be dying out on the racing

## 15 PROPER POSTURE

**Ever seen an old road cycling pro?** Who wants a humpback or pigeon chest?! Not one of them could stop a pig in an alley either.

circuit but you still just have to own a decent set of flats.

## 16 ALL ABILITIES

**Road riding is** a very focused sport. The emphasis is placed firmly on distance, big lungs and big legs. Mountain biking requires a rounder skill set.

Fitness is vital but at the same time so is mastering bike control – learning how to find flow and maintain momentum. In trail centres we have the perfect classrooms in which to practice and improve while having fun at the same time. Roadies have to be content with pedalling slightly further than they did last time.





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# 17

## FREEDOM

There are virtually no other vehicles that can match the mountain bike for its ability to go just about anywhere. The road bike is a scalpel-like instrument for dissecting smooth ribbons of tarmac but anything from a pothole up can result in hospitalisation for its pilot. Epic enduro race missions, all-day XC rides or rolling into town in the sun – the mountain bike can do it bloody all.



## 18 IT'S NOT THE NEW GOLF

Mountain biking maintains its own identity, unlike road cycling which is currently being swamped by every mid-level manager from here to Tallahassee. Board meetings aren't yet conducted on mountain bikes, exclusive custom riding kits and £120 training diaries aren't prevalent. It might just be the fact that riding a mountain bike involves a good deal of getting dirty but whatever it is, we're glad it's not become the latest yuppie fad. The same goes for hipsters too.

## 19 BUILDING TRAILS

Digging trails is a trial and error experience the like of which road cycling simply can't get close to. Traditionally,

trails are gouged from the earth in the middle of winter when the weather is at its bleakest and the ground is at its most

malleable. Riding a trail that you've crafted with your own skill, grunt and vision is a feeling unlike any other.

## 20 RULE BRITANNIA

Team Sky may be right at the sharp end of the UCI World Tour but that's thanks to an incredibly large injection of cash. We may not have the same funding, but our riders are still the best in the world – Steve Peat, Josh Bryceland, Gee and Rachel Atherton, Danny Hart, Brendan Fairclough, Manon Carpenter, Sam Dale...

## STILL NOT CONVINCED?

Perhaps these dubious facts will change your mind...

■ Medical science has proven that riding an MTB makes you more confident around the opposite sex.

Pheromones given off by mountain bikers are currently being bottled and trialled on lovelorn Turkish waiters.

■ In a recent poll, nine out of 10 people identified mountain bikers as 'the sort of person I'd buy a

beer for, even if I didn't know them'.

■ North Korean despot Kim Jong-un never rides an MTB.



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# GAME OF DRONES

*We see what all the fuss is about and spend a couple of days trying to ride under an unmanned camera 'copter*

**Words** Jake Ireland **Pics** Jacob Gibbins







Ieuan sends a jump while trying not to hit the drone with his body or bike

**F**ootage shot from drones is popping up in more and more bike videos, and with these unmanned aircraft becoming ever more affordable, we figured it was time we had a go ourselves. The question was, would we be able to get any shots good enough to grace our pages? We hooked up with Aspect Media's Jacob Gibbins and 'Copter Boy' Matt, his drone-flying friend, and headed to a secret location in the South West to give it a try.

Shooting with a drone presents some unique problems. For starters, most mountain biking in the UK takes place in dense woodland where flying anything more than a paper aeroplane is a problem. We had some legal loopholes to jump through too, with the official line being that nobody should be within 30m of a drone while it's taking off or landing – and 30m is a long way. That meant we needed to conduct our experiment on private land, where there was no risk of anyone getting whacked by a spinning rotor blade.

Thankfully we know a friendly landowner who happens to ride bikes and have a load of trails on his land, so we rocked up there along with up-

and-coming Downhill World Cup Junior Charlie Hatton and mountain bike maniac Ieuan Williams. If anyone was going to look rad from above, it was going to be these two!

### Lights, camera, action...

Jacob's drone set-up is relatively cheap in the grand scheme of things, at around £1,200, and consists of a GoPro HERO4 Black action cam attached to a DJI Phantom 2 remote control quadcopter. The batteries only give 20 minutes of flight time, so even though Jacob had brought three, we'd only have an hour of actual flying time.

We quickly encountered another problem too. While Jacob's set-up allowed us to see exactly what the drone was filming in video mode, there was no live view in photo mode. Figuring that it wasn't practical to fly the drone blind, we made the call to shoot video at super-high 4K resolution and then take some screen shots back in the office. Hopefully they'd be of good enough quality for us to print in the mag.

The filming went well, with some rad riding and plenty of experimentation with locations – we tried flying the drone through less dense wooded sections as well as in the open and up through the tree canopy to get a good variety of shots. At the end of the day I was pretty confident we'd hit the nail on the head and got the pictures we were after.

### If at first you don't succeed...

Unfortunately I was wrong. Despite getting some good angles, the screenshots just weren't good enough – shutter speed and focusing issues during filming meant some were blurry, some were out of focus and some were both! Feeling pretty gutted,

**On private land there was no risk of anyone getting whacked by a spinning rotor blade**





Winding singletrack looks really epic from above



Up in the trees you get a unique vantage point – just don't crash the drone!



## FLIGHT SAFETY THE LEGAL LOWDOWN

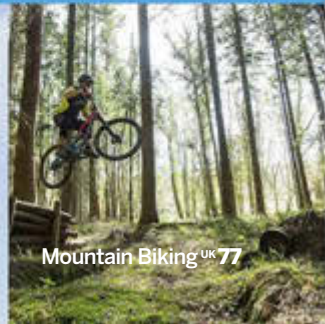
Drones are getting cheaper and more accessible to the general public, but as unmanned flying vehicles they're subject to the Air Navigation Order 2009 and you need to do things legally – after all, you don't want to cause a crash or even have your drone shot down, do you?

### The rules include:

- The drone must not endanger anyone or anything
- The drone must be in your sight at all times, and not higher than 400m or further away than 500m
- The drone must not be flown less than 50m away from any other person
- You (obviously!) can't fly your drone in any restricted airspace anywhere, for example near airports or military sites



You can shoot at angles that just aren't possible from the ground, and the drone doesn't even need to be that high







Dirt jumping looks kinda weird when viewed from above!

Jacob and I decided to head out for a second attempt now that we knew what needed changing.

We joined up with Ieuan and World Cup DH racer Katy Curd in some less dense woodland, and Jacob flew the drone blind, with the GoPro set to take a 12MP still image every half a second. This made the flying a lot more difficult and meant we weren't going to get any idea of the results until we'd run out of battery power. We headed to the local jump spot as well as some more open sections of trail to get as many bangers as we could in a few hours.

Back at base, I was stoked with the results. The dirt jump shots surprised me the most, with a unique angle and feel to them. They didn't look anything like I thought they would, with whips that looked rad from the ground looking like sideways awkwardness the higher up the drone flew. The best results were with the drone looking straight at the jump, with Ieuan pulling some really rad shapes.

Are there possibilities for more drone action in the pages of *MBUK*? Definitely. With the right riders, scenery and flying/filming skills, it's a chance to really mix things up. ⚙️

## Whips that looked rad from the ground looked like sideways awkwardness the higher it flew

### GET AIRBORNE! WHAT YOU NEED

There are hundreds of drones on the market, but the DJI Phantom is a popular choice among sports filmmakers because it's relatively cheap and is perfectly sized to carry an action cam (drones big enough to carry DSLRs cost thousands more). The Phantom 2 Vision+ H4-3D comes in at £774. You'll need a camera to bolt to it – Jacob uses a GoPro HERO4 Black (£409.99). This set-up will get you airborne and filming, but the chances are you'll want some more batteries (£91 each) and a live view screen (£49 for an iOS link-up or hundreds for a standalone screen set-up).







# FORM MEETS FUNCTION

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# FOX FACTORY

ALL-NEW  
FOR 2016

## FLOATX EVOL EXTRA VOLUME

Fox tested larger negative air volumes through the **RAD** program last year and with great success, now they have released the technology directly into the aftermarket with the new **EVOL** air sleeve.

A larger negative air volume softens the initial part of the travel so much it will make a coil shock feel harsh! The reconfiguration of the neg' volume has the added benefit of giving a more progressive ride.

A softer start and more bottom out resistance! What's not to like?

**EVOL** air cans will be available separately and will retrofit onto older shocks offering the full **EVOL** benefit!

**RIDEFOX.COM**

REDEFINE YOUR LIMITS

Distributed by: Mojo Suspension [www.mojo.co.uk](http://www.mojo.co.uk) +44 (0)1633 615 815





# LOVE YOUR BIKE

*Treat your pride and joy in the manner it deserves  
with these tips on maintenance, storage and security*

**F**orget Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, and, erm, Kim and Kanye – there are few classic love stories that come anywhere close to the pure, unadulterated passion of a mountain biker for their beloved bike. (But, shhh... don't let your other half hear you say that!)

There are also few that end as tragically as when a bike grinds to a halt or, even worse, gets swiped from your shed.

It's not just the expense – though our bikes do often cost far more than the cars used to ferry them to the trails. It's the relationships we form with

these machines, agonising over which one to commit to, treating it to shiny bits of bling and sharing some amazing experiences. There's history in those scratch marks in the paint and dings in the down tube. There aren't any other material possessions that come close.

That's why it's so important to keep your bike protected and in good working order. They don't expect much – just a bit of attention in the workshop from time to time, and somewhere dry and safe to rest. Here are our top tips for keeping your loyal companion well maintained and secure for a long, fun-filled life together.



# MAINTENANCE

Today's mountain bikes are resilient, well engineered pieces of kit that are designed to last. But, like any performance machine, they need to be looked after – especially if you're ploughing through silt-filled puddles, loamy turns and gritty trail centre descents together every weekend while being battered by the elements. Our bikes take one hell of a beating, but regular care and maintenance can make a huge difference, prolonging the life of key components and keeping everything running smoothly. Here are some simple things you can do to keep your bike purring, ride after ride...

## DRY AFTER WASHING

Use a microfibre cloth or old towel – basically, anything that'll soak up water – to get your bike nice and dry and ready to put away until next time. Use a rag to dry off then remove any excess lube from your transmission.

**Muc-Off microfibre polishing cloth** £6 [www.muc-off.com](http://www.muc-off.com)



## GIVE IT A ONCE-OVER

With your bike clean, look for signs of wear and tear. Check over all the bolts too, making sure they're all nice and tight – but not too tight!

**Park Tool TW-5 torque wrench**  
£99.99 [www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)



## WASH REGULARLY

Use a cleaning agent that won't damage paint or contaminate brake pads, then hose or sponge the bike down thoroughly with clean water. Avoid using high-power jet washers, which can displace grease from bearings.

**Pro-Green MTB Performance bike wash (1l)** £5.99  
[www.pro-greenmx.co.uk](http://www.pro-greenmx.co.uk)



## DEGREASE AND RE-LUBE

If your chain is covered in gunk, a wipe-over won't be enough – you'll need to use a chain cleaning tool and degreaser to remove it. After cleaning, remove excess degreaser with a rag and re-lube the chain.

**Pedro's Chain Pig**  
£24.99 [www.2pure.co.uk](http://www.2pure.co.uk)





## LOOK AFTER YOUR SUSPENSION

Your fork and shock will require regular servicing – the intervals will be listed in the owner's manual. Unless you have the tools and knowhow, it's best to consult a specialist. But there are some things you can do to pre-empt costly and easily avoidable wear and tear – keep your fork stanchions, shock shaft and seals clean, and use a suspension-specific silicone spray for lubrication.

**Juice Lubes Fork Juice (400ml)**  
£10 [www.juicelubes.co.uk](http://www.juicelubes.co.uk)



## HOME STORAGE

Finding the best way to keep your steed safe and secure without upsetting your nearest and dearest (we've found that you can only get away with keeping it in the bedroom for so long...), scuffing your freshly painted walls or – worse still – scratching your bike, isn't as easy as it sounds. Thankfully there are loads of great products on the market designed to assist you, whether you have the luxury of space in a garage or shed to house your bike, or you need to shoehorn it into a hallway, basement or flat. Here are a few of our favourite solutions...



### WALL MOUNTED RACK

These typically work well in garages and sheds, allowing bikes to be stored safely without consuming too much precious floor space.

**BBB ParkingLot II hook (BTL-19)**  
£9.95 [www.windwave.co.uk](http://www.windwave.co.uk)



### FREESTANDING VERTICAL RACK

A perfect solution if you have limited space, more than one bike to think about and don't want to make holes in your walls.

**Thule Bike Stacker 5781**  
£149.99 [www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)



### FLOOR STAND

This is a neater solution than just leaning your bike against a wall, and means less chance of scuffed paintwork or the bike falling over.

**Topeak LineUp stand**  
£44.99 [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)



### METAL BIKE SHED

If there's no room in your house and you haven't got a garage, a galvanised steel shed provides better protection for your pride and joy than a regular wooden one.

**Asgard Access Plus shed**  
£475 [www.asgardsss.co.uk](http://www.asgardsss.co.uk)



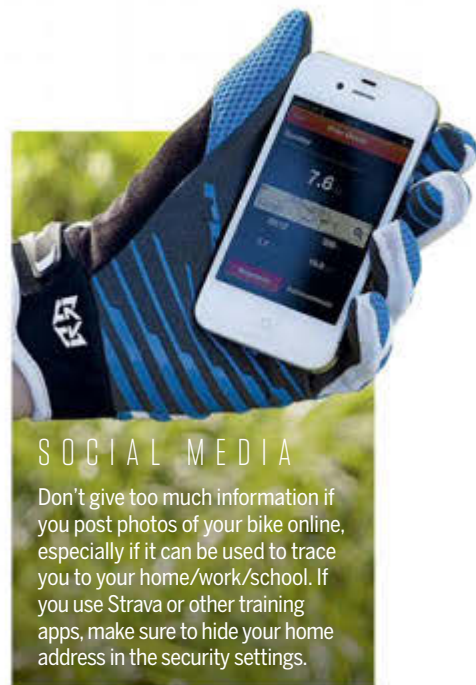
# SECURITY

There's nothing worse than finding some scumbag has made off with your pride and joy. From opportunists swooping on unlocked bikes to clued-up criminals who know exactly what brands to target and who are prepared to go to great lengths to steal them, it's harder than ever to keep your bike safe. With the boom in cycling meaning there are now more bikes on the streets, it's even easier for crooks to sell them on without too many questions. So, it's ultra important to think about security and invest in a decent lock and home security – and ways to avoid catching the attention of thieves.

## PLAY IT SAFE

Here are a few simple tips to minimise the chances of getting your bike nicked:

- Be aware of people at the trails who look out of place, especially if they're not riding or are asking odd questions about your bike
- When you're going home after a ride, check you're not being followed
- Don't take your bike out of your car/van if there are unsavoury looking characters in the vicinity
- Don't plaster your car in bike stickers and advertise your hobby
- Don't leave bike racks on overnight



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't give too much information if you post photos of your bike online, especially if it can be used to trace you to your home/work/school. If you use Strava or other training apps, make sure to hide your home address in the security settings.

UK CYCLE THEFT | 2013 - 2014 | **58%** DIDN'T LOCK THEIR BIKES

**389,144** VICTIMS

**75%** DIDN'T TELL THE POLICE | 66% CYCLED LESS | 25% GAVE UP CYCLING

WWW.STOLEN-BIKES.CO.UK

## LOCK IT OR LOSE IT



### WEARABLE LOCK

If you need to nip to the shops, a wearable lock is just the thing. Hiplok's V1.50 meets the Sold Secure Silver standard with its 8mm hardened steel chain and 10mm padlock. Don't leave your bike too long though! **Hiplok V1.50** £64.99 [www.hiplok.com](http://www.hiplok.com)



### D-LOCK

A quality D-lock offers good security. This Abus has a heavy-duty 13mm square-section shackle, is Sold Secure Gold rated and, thanks to its 230mm length, works well with awkward full-sus frames. **Abus Granite X-Plus 540 230mm** £84.99 [www.zyro.co.uk](http://www.zyro.co.uk)



### CHAIN & PADLOCK

A heavy-duty steel chain is ideal for home and garage security, and can secure multiple bikes. This one is tough, Sold Secure Gold rated and can resist even super-long 42in bolt croppers. **Pragmasis Protector 16mm** £119.95 [www.securityforbikes.com](http://www.securityforbikes.com)



### ANCHOR

Having a good lock is one thing, but for maximum peace of mind you'll need something steadfast to attach it to. A wall or floor anchor, especially one bolted into concrete, will give any thief a problem. **Kryptonite Stronghold anchor** £69.99 [www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)



### REGISTRATION

It won't stop your bike being stolen, but if you add details of your pride and joy to the national Bike Register, then in the event that it is pinched and the police recover it, at least they'll know whom to return it to. **Bike Register** £Free [www.bikeregister.com](http://www.bikeregister.com)





THE TRACER T275 CARBON. AVAILABLE IN FOUR MODELS: FACTORY, EXPERT, PRO, FOUNDATION  
FOR MORE INFO VISIT INTENSECYCLES.COM

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BAD ASS BIKES - 01761 462011  
BIKEACTIVE - 01920 872222  
BIKESTYLE - 01275 876572  
BLAZING BIKES - 01694 781515  
BRILLIANT BIKES - 01276 856779  
CLIMB ON BIKES - 01432 261211  
CYCLEDELIA - 01462 631555  
FALMOUTH CYCLES - 01326 373399  
FREEDOM BIKES - 01273 681698

GRAVITATE CYCLES - 0191 222 1682  
ILKLEY CYCLES - 01943 816101  
J C COOK - 01472 342406  
LEISURE LAKES DAVENTRY - 01327 310400  
MAD ELK CYCLES - 00353 14434798  
MONSTER BIKES - 01463 729500  
MOOSE CYCLES - 0208 5449166  
MUDDYBUM - 029 2062 6169  
NIRVANA CYCLES - 01306 740300  
NORTH WEST MTB CENTRE - 0161-4283311  
PEDDLERS - 01642 490135

POPA WHEELIE - 028 8772 7072  
RACE COMPANY - 01384 390221  
ROCKETS AND RASCALS - 01202 708842  
ROCKIN BIKES - 018222 58022  
SPECIALIZED/CERTINI BRISTOL - 01179 514942  
TWEEDS CYCLES - 01978 660003  
WELLINGBOROUGH CYCLES - 01933 278189  
WHEELBASE - 01539 821443  
YORKSHIRE MOUNTAIN BIKING - 01347 868775





## "THE BEST TRAIL HARDTAIL BAR NONE"

THE DIRT 100 2015

With their finely tuned Whyte geometry these bikes are faster, more confident and more fun than any hardtail has a right to be. The reviewers agree, with WHAT CYCLE? giving the 901 5 stars and calling it "an inspiring, near-faultless bike", and What Mountain Bike summing it up by saying: "Whichever option you pick from Whyte's new 650b Trail Hardtail range, you're onto a winner." ★★★★★



901 £1199 12.2kg



905 £1599 12kg



909 £2299 11.8kg

For more information – or to try one for yourself, contact your local Whyte retailer.



[whyte.bike](http://whyte.bike)

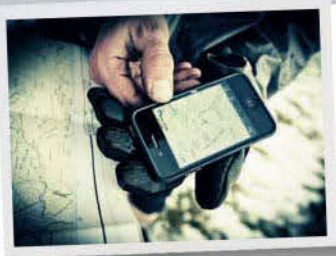
  
**WHYTE**  
PERFORMANCE BY DESIGN





'Mountain bike' – the clue's in the name! Too often the only glimpse our bikes get of a mountain is passing one on the way to a trail centre. Here's how to get your alpine horn on...

### MAKE A PLAN



Planning is essential when going up a mountain. First of all, check to make sure there are no bike bans on the mountain itself. Secondly, make sure someone responsible (not your mate Kev who's off on a stag do for a week in Amsterdam) knows where you're going and how many of you there are. Research the route online but also take a paper Ordnance Survey map with you in case your phone/GPS gets broken or lost.

### WHAT EXACTLY IS A MOUNTAIN?

A mountain's a big pointy rock with snow on top, right? Well, surprisingly, there's no universal definition. Us Brits keep it vague – an accepted definition is 'a natural elevation that is impressive or notable' but we usually define it as a summit at least 2,000ft (610m) high. American geologists prefer to keep it above a less lofty 1,000ft (305m). Basically, you'll know one when you see one...

### CHANGE ATTITUDE

Riding mountains necessitates a change of attitude for most riders. For a start, the vast majority of your ride won't actually involve much riding. Getting a 30lb lump of bike up a 1,000m slope requires a fair amount of grunt work. This is all about accomplishment and attrition, not about slapping round some berms and stopping at McDonald's on the way home. »

### ESSENTIAL GEAR

While Britain's mountains are largely accessible – in mountain terms, anyway – you should always plan for the worst and pack smart.



#### First aid kit

Exposed rocks and steep slopes are a lethal combo, so be prepared to deal with any injuries with the proper kit.



#### Mobile phone

Make sure it's fully charged – 6% will not 'probably do'. Being able to call Mountain Rescue may save your life.



#### Foil blanket

A lightweight lifesaver that'll keep you both warm and easily identifiable in the event of an emergency.



#### Warm clothing

Even if it's roasting at the bottom, it won't be at the top. Carry a jacket, warm gloves and pads for the descent.



## MOUNT SNOWDON

Bikes are allowed on Snowdon outside of the voluntary ban at peak times, when its slopes are swamped with tourists. Snowdon is both great and terrible in that it has a cafe at its summit, which is accessible by a mountain railway. Your feeling of achievement upon conquering the peak in the spirit of Sir Edmund Hilary may just be dampened by a stern-looking dinner lady smoking a fag.



## HEAD TO EUROPE

Continental Europe does somewhat better than us when it comes to mountains, and in all its big ranges you'll find tailor-made bike parks and trails. Take a chairlift effortlessly up the mountains then ride like the clappers all the way down. Towns like Les Gets and Morzine in the French Alps are a superb start as they subsidise their ski season with MTB tourists in summer.

## GO TO MARS



The tallest known mountain that man has yet found is on Mars – it's called Olympus Mons and stands at a trifling 21,171m (69,459ft). That's well over twice the height of Earth's biggest effort, Mount Everest. If you're planning on going, let us know...

## CARRY YOUR BIKE



An essential technique that's overlooked by many riders, effective hike-a-biking is the safest and most energy-efficient way to get your bike up steep and difficult slopes

**1** Stand on the non-drive side of your bike with your cranks level, left-hand pedal rearward.

**2** Pick up your bike and hoist it so it's flat across your back, on top of your pack (it'll be damn uncomfortable if you're not wearing a pack).

**3** Use your left hand to work the bike into place, then keep it secure as you climb by holding the left-hand grip with your right hand. This leaves your left one free to grab on to rocks if you need to.

## BRITISH PEAKS

The British Isles may not be famed for their majestic mountains, but we do have some pretty decent ones that you can have a crack at by bike

**BEN NEVIS**  
SCOTLAND  
(1,344m/4,409ft)

**BEN MORE**  
SCOTLAND  
(1,174m/3,852ft)

**SGURR ALASDAIR**  
ISLE OF SKYE  
(992m/3,254ft)

**SLIEVE DONARD**  
NORTHERN IRELAND  
(850m/2,790ft)

**CARN EIGE**  
SCOTLAND  
(1,183m/3,881ft)

**SNOWDON**  
WALES  
(1,085m/3,560ft)

**SCAFELL PIKE**  
ENGLAND  
(978m/3,209ft)

**NEXT ISSUE**  
Get riding to work



# VISION STATEMENT



## MARIN 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY DEMO TOUR

To celebrate our 30<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary we're running a UK Demo Tour. Come and check out just why Marin have been at the forefront of mountain bike design for three decades.

Save £150.00 off the cost of a new bike on all orders placed on the day, plus receive an exclusive FREE Marin goodie bag!

TO FIND YOUR NEAREST DEMO DAY, VISIT:

[www.marinbikes.com/gb/promos/marin-demo-days](http://www.marinbikes.com/gb/promos/marin-demo-days)



/paligap.cc

Find your local Marin Dealer at: [www.paligap.cc/dealer](http://www.paligap.cc/dealer)

# MARIN

BIKES  
CALIFORNIA

RIDER: MATT ERBENTRAUT



[MARINBIKES.COM](http://MARINBIKES.COM)



# ULTIMATE UPGRADES

**Our pick of the 10 best changes you can make to improve your riding and bike**

**Words** Alex Evans **Pics** Various

**T**he right upgrade can improve your bike's handling and improve the way you ride, but which kit swaps make the biggest difference? We asked our testers to get their thinking caps on and come up with their 10 ultimate upgrades, complete with price-no-object and big-value examples. Simple changes such as fitting new pedals won't break the bank but can give you much more confidence, while bigger upgrades can inspire you to ride harder and drastically alter how your bike feels. So have a look at our recommendations, work out what you want from your bike and riding, then give your wallet a bashing and get out there and rip up the trails like never before!

## Dropper seatpost

**The dropper seatpost** has revolutionised how we ride. Rides are no longer punctuated with constant stops to adjust seat height for climbs and descents, and trails flow seamlessly into one another. Seatposts at the pricier end of the scale normally offer unlimited adjustment within their height range, buttery smooth operation and up to 150mm (5.9in) of drop. Budget posts tend to be heavier, with a shorter drop and a reduced lifespan. If you're looking for more flow when out riding then this is an essential upgrade that transforms trails into long ribbons of biking joy.

**RockShox Reverb** | £350,  
[www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk)  
**Nukeproof OKLO** | £179.99  
[www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)



## Wheels

**Wheel weight, width** and stiffness can have a big effect on bike handling, tyre profile and grip levels. Changing wheels can transform a bike by improving maneuverability, acceleration and/or durability. This is a potentially pricey upgrade, but with a lighter and stronger wheelset your bike will require less maintenance and will feel more lively. Just make sure to buy the right diameter wheels – 26in, 650b or 29in – with the right axle sizes for your bike! (See our Group Test on page 136 for more.)

**Mavic CrossMax XL Pro LTD WTS** | £675  
[www.mavic.co.uk](http://www.mavic.co.uk)

**Superstar Tech 4 DS25** | from £184.99  
[www.superstarcomponents.com](http://www.superstarcomponents.com)

## Pedals

**Pedals are one** of the most important connections between you and your bike, and a good, high quality pair can really help your riding progress. If you prefer flats, a wider pedal with a concave platform will offer more grip and support than a narrower, flatter one. If you like to clip in, we recommend opting for pedals with a platform around the mechanism – that way if you fail to clip in first time, you won't be left hanging. Paying more will get you better bearings and materials, which should mean longer-lasting pedals.

**CrankBrothers Mallet DH** | £124.99  
[www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)  
**DMR V12** | £49.99 [www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk)



## Cockpit

By changing your handlebar and stem you can alter how long, high and responsive your bike feels. The current trend is for short stems and wide bars, which give you extra leverage, increasing control and reducing the chance of unexpected trail inputs knocking you off line. At the top of the price range, high-spec carbon fibre bars and stems keep the weight-conscious happy. Mid-range components represent a good compromise between price and performance, while budget offerings often work just as well but tend to weigh more.

**Race Face SIXC bar** | £129 [www.silverfish-uk.co.uk](http://www.silverfish-uk.co.uk)  
**Spank Spike Race stem** | £59.99  
[www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**Renthal Fatbar** | £64.99 [www.ison-distribution.com](http://www.ison-distribution.com)  
**Superstar Razor CNC DH stem** | £34.99  
[www.superstarcomponents.com](http://www.superstarcomponents.com)

## Geometry adjusters

Some bikes have adjustable geometry, letting you alter the head angle and bottom bracket height to suit different tracks and riding styles. If yours doesn't, various aftermarket options are available. Offset shock bushings can be used to lower the bottom bracket for improved cornering or raise it for better ground clearance, while angled headset cups let you slacken the head angle for stability at speed or steepen it to improve low-speed handling. These inexpensive parts can be used to bring your bike's geometry up to date with the latest machines on the market.

**Works Components Headcups** | from  
 £74.99 [www.workscomponents.co.uk](http://www.workscomponents.co.uk)  
**Offsetbushings.com offset bushings** |  
 from £10 [www.offsetbushings.com](http://www.offsetbushings.com)

## Tyres

As the interface between your bike and the ground, the right tyre can bring your riding on in leaps and bounds, increasing confidence massively. Thicker casings decrease the threat of puncturing and improve ride stability but add weight. Thinner tyres are more likely to puncture but improve acceleration. Pricier tyres tend to use more advanced rubber compounds that don't necessarily wear any slower but offer more grip, along with tread patterns designed for specific riding conditions. Spend wisely and decide what it is you want from a tyre before upgrading.

**Schwalbe Magic Mary Evo TrailStar**  
**27.5x2.35in** | £54.99  
[www.schwalbe.co.uk](http://www.schwalbe.co.uk)  
**Specialized Butcher Grid 2Bliss 27.5x2.3in** |  
 £35 [www.specialized.com](http://www.specialized.com)



**LAZER**<sup>®</sup>

LAZERSPORT.CO.UK

# OASIS



Patented Lazer Rollsys<sup>®</sup> retention system for comfortable quick adjustment on the move, plus...

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| // VENTILATION      | 21 VENTS, TUNNEL TESTED  |
| // RBS              | RIGIDITY BRACE SYSTEM    |
| // COOLMAX          | MAKES MOISTURE DISAPPEAR |
| // CONSTRUCTION     | IN MOLD (3 PIECES)       |
| // GOPRO COMPATIBLE | CAMERA MOUNT INCLUDED    |

CHRIS AKRIGG  
© Sam Needham

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**MADISON**<sup>SR</sup>



## Fork

A new **suspension** fork can rejuvenate your bike and boost your confidence, helping to progress your riding. The latest top-end forks, such as our recent group test winner the Fox 36, have amazing performance right out of the box, with sophisticated damping and an incredible ride feel. If you're on a limited budget then capable forks can still be found, though you may have to sacrifice some adjustment. Make sure the fork you choose is suitable for your bike and riding style – a fork with too much travel can ruin your bike's geometry and hinder your shredding, as well as potentially invalidating the frame warranty.

**Fox 36 Float 160 FIT RC2** | £909

[www.mojo.co.uk](http://www.mojo.co.uk)

**Marzocchi 350 CR** | £429.95

[www.windwave.co.uk](http://www.windwave.co.uk)

## Shock and fork service

**Stiff, unresponsive forks** and bouncy rear shocks are symptomatic of suspension in dire need of servicing. Send them off to a tuning guru such as TF Tuned or Mojo and they should be able to get your bike riding like it did the day you bought it. This cost effective and easy fix will have you riding faster and hitting turns harder. Prices vary depending on the fork/shock model – for example, a Fox 36 service will normally cost you just over £100. If you fancy trying it yourself to save some money, check out *BikeRadar* or the manufacturer's website for step-by-step guides.

**Mojo Suspension** | £varies

[www.mojo.co.uk](http://www.mojo.co.uk)

**TF Tuned** | £varies [www.tftuned.com](http://www.tftuned.com)



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FACTORY RACING

jonnymole.com

**K-Force low riser handlebar + OS-99CSI stem**

**SIZE**

- Ø31.8mm x W660, 700mm
- 18mm rise
- 8° back sweep, 3° up sweep

**WEIGHT**

- 170 grams (660mm)
- 180 grams (700mm)

**K-Force Flat handlebar + OS-99CSI stem**

**SIZE**

- Ø31.8mm x W600, 685mm
- 6° back sweep, 0° up sweep
- 9° back sweep, 4° up sweep

**WEIGHT**

- 120 grams (600mm)
- 140 grams (685mm)

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FULLSPEEDAHEAD.COM



## 1x transmission

**Narrow/wide-toothed chainrings,** wide-range cassettes and clutch-equipped rear mechs have revolutionised the mountain bike drivetrain, making 1x10 or 1x11 transmissions a viable option for most riders. With no need for a granny ring, front mech and shifter or chain guide, weight and clutter is reduced, yet the gearing range is so large that a single chainring is enough for the toughest of climbs. SRAM were the first to market with 11-speed XX1 and have just launched the budget GX version, though both need a special XD freehub. Shimano are hot on their heels with XTR and XT, which can be used with standard wheels. If you don't want to shell out on a whole new groupset, fitting an aftermarket narrow/wide ring up front and a 'crawler cog' (a 40t or 42t expander sprocket that fits behind the cassette) out back is a cost effective way to upgrade your gearing.

**SRAM XX1** | £1,064

[www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk)

**Shimano XTR** | £801.98

[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)

**SRAM GX** | £451

[www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk)

**Shimano Deore XT** | £408

[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)

**Blackspire Snaggletooth chainring (32t)** | £46 [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**e\*thirteen EX Cog** | £54.95

[www.silverfish-uk.com](http://www.silverfish-uk.com)



## Front mudguard

**Summer is here** and trail conditions in our neck of the woods are at an all-time high, but a mudguard is still a solid investment. When the inevitable happens and it tips it down, keeping mud off your face means you can stay focused on shredding the trails.

**POWA Products DFender** | £49

[www.powa-products.com](http://www.powa-products.com)

**Marsh Guard** | £10

[www.marshguard.com](http://www.marshguard.com)





# ALL OR NOTHING

DB

The Myers range of all mountain 27.5", 140mm travel hard tails are the gravity oriented all mountain riders dream machine. When we set out designing this range, we wanted a bike which takes us back to why we love mountain biking originally; FUN. The Myers is a bike that's at home tearing down a hill side run, or ripping through the single track at a trail center.

**DIAMONDBACK**  
myers.diamondback.co.uk



# Hi, five



The new Orange Five; longer, stiffer, slacker.  
Faster? That's down to you.

**ONE PIVOT, SIMPLY RELIABLE**



**five | alpine160 | SEGMENT  | alpine five**

THE ALL-MOUNTAIN AND TRAIL BIKE CONCEPT FROM ORANGE – "IT JUST WORKS"



orangebikes

27.5

29



# MBUK WRECKED & RATED

P118 **BIKE TEST**

## SUB-£1,000 BIKES

• Boardman FS Team 650b • Genesis Longitude  
• Norco Charger 7.1 • Scott Scale 760

PLUS



**110 SIX OF THE BEST**  
Mini pumps rated



**112 MBUK MACHINES**  
The latest on our rides



**136 GROUP TEST**  
Thrashable wheelsets

### MBUK Ratings

WE BASE OUR SCORES ON VALUE FOR  
MONEY AND PERFORMANCE



**EXCEPTIONAL:**  
A genuine class leader



**VERY GOOD:** One of the  
best you can buy



**GOOD:** It'll do the job  
and do it well



**BELOW AVERAGE:**  
Flawed in some way



**POOR:** Simply put,  
don't bother!



The best product on  
test in terms of quality,  
performance and price



An exceptional product  
for the money – you're  
getting a fantastic deal



A truly outstanding  
product, regardless  
of the pricetag

### FIVE REASONS WHY OUR TESTS ARE THE BEST

- 01** Our test team is made up of the most respected bike and kit testers in the world
- 02** We have unrivalled knowledge and experience
- 03** We spend a vast amount of time and money making sure we get it right
- 04** We care more about telling you the truth than anyone else anywhere!
- 05** We aren't influenced by PR or advertisers



#### HOW WE TEST

Detailed product check in  
the MBUK workshop

Strip and rebuild, checking  
for potential problems and  
improvements

Hit the trails... hard!

Test in real riding  
conditions till we know  
everything there is to  
know about the product

Re-test product with  
another tester

#### OUR TESTER TEAM

Our two main bike testers,  
Guy Kesteven and Seb  
Rogers, have tested  
more than 3,000 bikes  
between them over the  
past 20 years.

Our testing is headed  
up by Technical Editor in  
Chief Rob Weaver, who  
gets new products in as

soon as they're available  
and coordinates all  
the testing through our  
vastly experienced band  
of testers.

#### OUR TESTS ARE

**Relevant**  
**Comprehensive**  
**Independent**  
**Fair**  
**Accurate**



# MBUK WRECKED & RATED

Brand New Kit

## MBUK Test Team



**Rob Weaver**

With two decades of riding and racing experience, Rob knows what works and what doesn't



**Guy Kesteven**

Our ultra experienced northern test engine is the ultimate exposer of kit that doesn't measure up



**Olly Forster**

Gravity loving Olly has been riding long enough to know what he wants and won't settle for second best



**James Blackwell**

Short and fast, pinned or binned, Art Editor Jimmer has been testing kit longer than he'll happily admit to



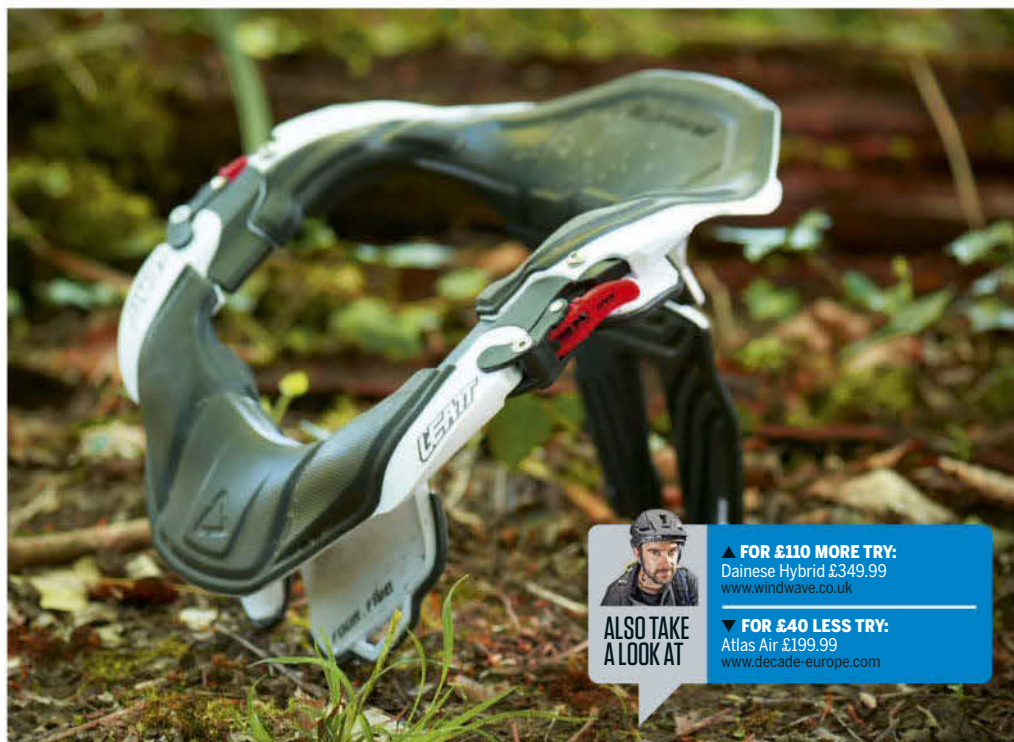
**James Costley-White**

JCW casts the same critical eye over the latest kit as he does the articles submitted to the mag



**Jake Ireland**

Jake spends every day riding, and his injury list proves he's pushing the limits to provide the very best testing



ALSO TAKE  
A LOOK AT

▲ **FOR £110 MORE TRY:**  
Dainese Hybrid £349.99  
[www.windwave.co.uk](http://www.windwave.co.uk)

▼ **FOR £40 LESS TRY:**  
Atlas Air £199.99  
[www.decade-europe.com](http://www.decade-europe.com)

## Leatt DBX 4.5 neck brace

£239.99 **Hotlines** [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**HAVING TRIED NEARLY** every iteration of Leatt's impressive MTB-specific neck brace, it's fair to say their latest design is the comfiest yet. Though the DBX 4.5 doesn't have front and rear adjustment allowing you to tailor the range of head motion like the top-flight 6.5 brace does, we had no issues with restricted movement.

Getting the fit right doesn't take long either. Leatt provide a variety of spares that allow you to tailor the feel with minimal

faff, though you do need to use an Allen key to install or remove the wedges used to adjust the size of the neck opening. One of the neatest adjustments can be found at the top of the rear strut – by swapping the four small, angled rubber bumpers, you can adjust the angle at which it sits on your back.

In use, the brace didn't move excessively, even without using the supplied chest straps and when riding really rough, steep trails. There was plenty of

helmet clearance with all the lids we tried it with too, with very little interference even at extreme angles.

If it weren't enough that this bit of kit could potentially save your life, it's now also a doddle to clean thanks to the wipe-clean padding used. **ROB**

**MBUK**

Easy to adjust, comfy and now even easier to clean – plus it might save your life!



## 100% Celium gloves

£19.99 **Decade Europe** [www.decade-europe.com](http://www.decade-europe.com)

**IF YOU'RE NOT** the biggest fan of wearing gloves but still want to give your paws a bit of protection, the Celiums could be just up your street. They're more like a second skin than a full-on glove thanks to their super-thin, stretchy mesh backing and ultra-minimal cuff. The cuff is longer than most, but the stretchy, light fit means it goes completely unnoticed once on. Helping to maintain the minimalist feeling, the perforated palm is nice and thin and doesn't bunch when holding the grips. Though 100% include silicone grip sections on the middle and index fingers, that's about it for extras. **ROB**

**MBUK** ★★★★★







ALSO TAKE  
A LOOK AT

▲ **FOR £10 MORE TRY:**  
Shimano M200 £149.99  
[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)

▼ **£10 LESS TRY:**  
Mavic Crossmax £130  
[www.mavic.co.uk](http://www.mavic.co.uk)

# Five Ten Kestrel shoes

£140 **Five Ten** [www.fiveten.com](http://www.fiveten.com)

**THE KESTRELS' SVELTE,** minimalist looks and lack of laces won't be everyone's cup of tea, but with someone like 10-time downhill world champ Nico Vouilloz helping with development, expectations of these £140 shoes are, understandably, high.

It's the closure system that first grabs your attention. Unlike other manufacturers who use a combination of BOA dials and Velcro straps, Five Ten have opted to use a single BOA dial and cable arrangement to clamp the shoes securely to your feet. Not only does this reduce weight (520g per shoe, with cleats, in a UK size 8), this simple design also contributes to their clutter-free look. It's also

where the Kestrels can falter slightly though, in terms of comfort at least.

Though they feel extremely comfortable when you initially slip them on, it's tricky to get the cable to tension evenly as you turn the indexed BOA dial. As the cable criss-crosses itself it binds, leaving the shoe tight in some places and baggier in others. On the trail, we found this resulted in pinching across the forefoot and/or aching at the arch of the foot.

Taking time to tension the BOA dial while manipulating the cable does help, resulting in a more even, secure fit and, ultimately, a more comfortable shoe, but you shouldn't really have to do this. On longer rides

we found ourselves either leaving the Kestrels a little looser than we'd ideally have wanted or releasing the tension of the BOA system and only tightening the dial when we hit technical sections. On the plus side, popping the BOA dial up releases all the cable tension and makes it easy to take the Kestrels off, which is good when they're caked in mud.

Fit aside, these shoes have plenty of positives, most notably the dual-compound sole, which is one of the best we've tried. Five Ten's super-tacky Stealth Mi6 rubber is used on the toe and heel and provides stellar traction when scrabbling back up awkward trail sections, while the firmer Stealth C4 rubber in

the centre of the outsole meant we never struggled when clipping in/out of platform style clipless pedals. Sole stiffness is well balanced too, with a stiff, power-efficient feel that works well with smaller, non-platform pedals but is also forgiving enough when riding long, bumpy trails all day long.

Add to that the splashproof upper and sturdy toe box, and the Kestrels really are full of promise – Five Ten just need to get the closure mechanism properly sorted out. **ROB**



**MBUK**  
Some impressive features, but the single BOA closure requires patience to avoid discomfort



### PRODUCT NEWS



#### Juiced up

US brand Canfield Brothers are best known for their full-suspension downhill and trail bikes, but their line of hardtails shouldn't be underestimated. Their new carbon 29er, the EPO, is designed around a 140mm (5.5in) or 120mm (4.7in) travel fork, giving a slack head angle of 66.8 or 67.9 degrees, respectively. The frame sports ISCG-05 chain guide tabs and a 12x142mm bolt-through rear axle too, further bolstering its aggressive riding credentials. The frame will set you back £1,495. Head to [www.cranknuts.com](http://www.cranknuts.com) for more details.

#### XTacy

Well, it may not leave us quite *that* hot and bothered but we're still bloody excited about Shimano's new Deore XT groupset. The latest M8000 version of the Japanese company's workhorse transmission sports an 11-speed cassette. Even better, this costs just £80 in 1x-specific, 11-42t guise. Fear not if you like multiple chainrings though, because you can also get a 2/3x11 11-40t cassette for £74.99. Word is that the shifting feel is very similar to that of 11-speed XTR M9000, so expectations are already sky high. We'll have more info next month. Until then, head to [www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk) for more.



#### Sat-cam

Sat-nav gurus TomTom have launched their first action cam, the £299.99 Bandit. This cylindrical camera allows you to overlay GPS data such as speed, location and altitude on top of your videos. It can film in Full HD (1,080p) resolution at 60 frames per second and capture stills at 16MP, has slow-motion and time-lapse features, has a handy little screen and lets you share your videos via wi-fi or Bluetooth. Check out [www.tomtom.com](http://www.tomtom.com) for the full lowdown.



## Bontrager G4 Team Issue 27.5x2.35in downhill tyre

£44.99 Bontrager [www.bontrager.com](http://www.bontrager.com)

**AT FIRST GLANCE** you'd be forgiven for mistaking Bontrager's G4 Team Issue for Maxxis's popular Minion DHF, but there are some subtle differences to the tread pattern if you look a little closer.

The heavily ramped centre knobs help with rolling speed, and considering the tacky 42a durometer rubber compound, the G4s certainly don't feel sluggish on the hill.

Grip in dry conditions is consistent and predictable enough that you can carve the

bike hard and deep into corners with a confident understanding of the outcome. That said, when it's a touch moist out, the G4 works better up front than on the rear because it can get a touch skatey under braking.

We've yet to puncture since fitting our set of dual-ply G4s, even after some out of shape high-speed wobbles through rough rock sections. They are heavy though, at 1.3kg each. **ROB**

MBUK ★★★★★



## Bluegrass Raccoon gloves

£19.99 Bluegrass

[www.bluegrasseagle.com](http://www.bluegrasseagle.com)

**IF YOU'RE INTO** thin gloves but have a tight budget, the Raccoons from Bluegrass are certainly worth a look. The fit is great, with a near perfect cut around the thumb and index finger. The latter gets some handy reinforcing too, which should help boost durability. Thanks to the perforated, ultra-thin palm, feel and feedback from the handlebar is superb, and there's next to no bunching when gripping the bar tightly. The stretchy back means you won't get too sweaty in the Raccoons either. On top of that, the cuffless entry makes these gloves extremely comfortable and there's also a small snout wipe should you need it. **ROB**

MBUK ★★★★★

## CrankBrothers Sterling CO<sub>2</sub> kit

£16.99 Extra UK [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)

**FOR JUST UNDER** £17, this CrankBrothers kit gives you a CO<sub>2</sub> inflator plus two 16g threaded cartridges, each of which will happily inflate a big 27.5x2.4in tyre. Additional cartridges cost £1.99 each and come in 12g, 16g and 20g sizes, should you need any spares. The inflator head fits both Presta and Schrader valves easily enough, and the spring-loaded head makes it surprisingly easy to control the air flow when you're trying to set accurate pressures. With only two small plastic surfaces to grip on to, it's worth keeping your gloves on when using the inflator – otherwise when the cartridge begins to get frosty with use you'll end up with frozen fingers. **ROB**

MBUK ★★★★★







# FUNN ZIPPA chain guide

£99.99 (with bashguard) Decade Europe [www.decade-europe.com](http://www.decade-europe.com)

**FUNN'S ZIPPA CHAIN** guide bears more than a passing resemblance to e\*thirteen's excellent LG1+, which is no bad thing. The anodised gold and red hardware won't make a difference when the going gets rough but it adds to the impression of quality, along with the neatly milled backplate and cut-away taco bashguard. Unfortunately, the hardware isn't captive, and had a habit of falling out when swinging the top guide open. At 175g the ZIPPA

can easily be used for trail bike duties but the anodised aluminium lower roller made a slight rumbling noise during use, which was exaggerated when we were riding at the top of the cassette on steep climbs. If gravity riding is your main thing then it could prove to be a solid option, but if you prefer to pedal to the top then you might find yourself wishing for a quieter, lighter alternative. **HUW**

**MBUK** ★★★★★

# Exaform Vareo Remote dropper post

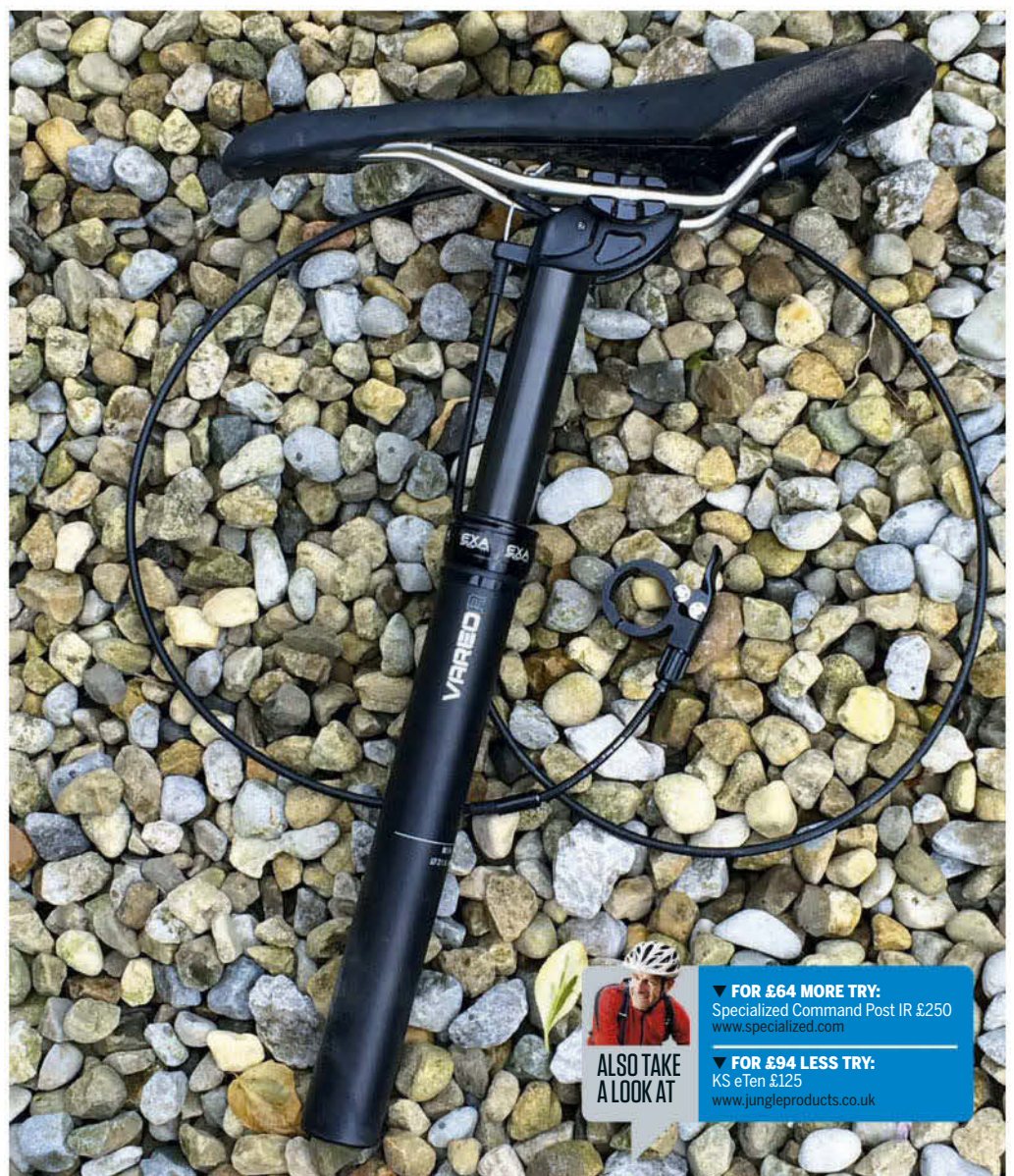
£185.99 **Today's Cyclist**  
[www.todayscyclist.co.uk](http://www.todayscyclist.co.uk)

**EXAFORM IS THE** 'budget' sub-brand of dropper seatpost makers KS, but somehow this post has ended up significantly more expensive than the KS branded equivalent.

The next-to-grip remote lever is easy to find and the articulated cable noodle and barrel adjuster mean neat cable runs and correct operating tension for smooth operation. We've had no reliability issues and the 20mm rear offset means you don't have to nudge you saddle forward like on most inline dropper posts.

At a hefty 725g the Vareo weighs 100g more than KS's LEV and 180g more than RockShox's Reverb. It's only imported in a 31.6mm diameter, with a drop of just 100mm. You occasionally have to pull it back up to height if it's been left compressed for a while too, and the forward cable routing is a bigger threat to frame paint than rear or side routing.

Most damagingly, you can buy almost exactly the same post labelled as a KS eTen for £125, and that one's available in 30.9mm and 31.6mm sizes, and in an internally routed Integra version for £150. **GUY**



**Smooth, reliable and affordable but heavy, short-stroked and essentially identical posts are cheaper**

★★★★★



**ALSO TAKE A LOOK AT**

▼ **FOR £64 MORE TRY:**  
Specialized Command Post IR £250  
[www.specialized.com](http://www.specialized.com)

▼ **FOR £94 LESS TRY:**  
KS eTen £125  
[www.jungleproducts.co.uk](http://www.jungleproducts.co.uk)



### PRODUCT NEWS

Continued



### Serious firepower

Intense have unveiled the latest addition to their M-series line of DH bikes, the M16. This beautifully crafted race machine sports 650b wheels, a 12x157mm rear axle, 215-241mm (8.5-9.5in) of rear wheel travel, a slack 63.5-degree head angle and decent length 445mm chainstays. UK distributors Extra are offering the frame for £2,899 plus full builds that top out at £6,599 with a RockShox Boxxer World Cup fork and Cane Creek Double Barrel rear shock. More info can be found at [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk).



### Stubby Stubington

Short stems are all the rage, and they could get even shorter thanks to Pacenti. Their PDent concept puts a dimple up to 15mm deep in the centre of the handlebar. This allows it to sit right up against the fork's steerer tube and means stem length can be reduced to as little as 12mm. Pacenti hope to license the idea to other brands. Have a ganders at [www.pacenticycle.com](http://www.pacenticycle.com) for more interesting kit.

### Half fat

Manitou and SUNringlé have joined the big push towards 650b+/29+ bikes. Manitou's new Magnum fork costs £649.99 and uses the same impressive damper and spring combo used in the Mattoc and Dorado, but with a chassis designed to take a 110mm front hub. SUNringlé's latest Mulefut 50SL rims are a whopping 50mm wide, are available in 29in and 650b sizes, and will set you back £103.99 per rim. Check [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com) for availability.



ALSO TAKE  
A LOOK AT

▼ FOR £40  
MORE TRY:  
Bontrager Flash  
Charger £99.99  
[www.bontrager.com](http://www.bontrager.com)

## Airshot tubeless tyre inflator

£59.99 Airshot [www.airshotltd.com](http://www.airshotltd.com)

**AIRSHOT'S DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE** can charger finally takes easy tubeless tyre fitting out of the garage and up to the trailhead/race paddock.

The problem with tubeless tyres has always been getting enough air into them fast enough to seal the bead on to the rim without an air compressor or a frenzied – and often futile – track pump session. There are various homebrew solutions involving cola bottles and butchered

pumps but the South Wales based designers of Airshot have really done the job properly.

All you do is screw the metal hose chuck on to your valve (this is more secure than a push-fit head), inflate the blue tank to 130psi with a track pump, turn the dump valve and – woomf! – you get instant inflation on every reliable tubeless/tubeless ready set-up we've tried.

The price might seem high for a tin tank and a pump hose but Airshot have sweated the details

to make it as fool and leak proof as possible. There's even a valve core adaptor in case yours is too full of old sealant to get enough air through fast enough. It's totally reusable too, and as long as you've got a pump to fill it in the first place, you can use it just about anywhere. **GUY**

MBUK

The price may seem steep but this is a must-have portable inflator for tubeless tyre tinkerers



## Alpinestars Drop 2 shorts

£94.99 i-ride [www.i-ride.co.uk](http://www.i-ride.co.uk)

**WITH THE WORD** 'enduro' printed inside the waist, Alpinestars' intentions for these shorts are clear from the outset. The fit is fairly loose but the tailored cut means the legs follow your body's contours rather than flapping around and looking overly baggy. Movement is free and easy, and the lightweight, high quality material feels great to ride in.

Alpinestars have put some thought into the pockets too, providing open hip pockets that are big enough for a phone and

wallet and come in handy off the bike, as well as smaller zipped pockets that sit a little further down the leg. Zipped vents can be opened to allow extra air through, although the thin, stretchy crotch panel and rear waist vent already do a good job of stopping you overheating.

The padded liner supplied with the shorts was an uncomfortable disappointment, but look past that and these are top notch. **JAKE**

MBUK ★★★★★







**Stem: Tightened ✓**  
**Brakes: Adjusted ✓**  
**Gears: Fine-tuned ✓**  
**Lung capacity: Whatever it takes ✓**

With Topeak's Prep Series, you're back in the saddle in no time. PrepStation Pro, PrepStation, PrepBox, Prep 25 and PrepStand™ Pro all make maintenance as simple and convenient as possible. When your bike's ready to go, you're prepared to ride.



**PrepStation Pro**  
Complete Mobile Repair Series



Distributed in the UK by Extra UK, [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)





## WTB Volt Carbon saddle

£160 **Hotlines** [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**THE VOLT CARBON** sits atop a five-model range. While WTB offer their other Volt saddles in a choice of three widths, this one only comes in the narrowest 135mm size and uses full-carbon rails to keep weight down to 148g – great if you're looking to balance comfort and weight saving.

The slim profile, familiar scooped shape and long central channel create a natural and comfortable riding position

that helps to securely cup your behind. The DNA padding has proven to be very comfortable too, even on long days in the saddle.

There's no denying that the price tag will put some riders off, but with the range starting at just £29.99 for that same, comfortable shape, there's likely to be an option that suits most people's budget. **JAMER**

**MBUK** ★★☆☆

## CrankBrothers 5050 3 pedals

£76.99 **Extra UK** [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)



**THE 5050 3s** are CrankBrothers' top flat-pedal offerings, and at less than £80, they're not bad value for pedals of such quality.

The platform is large and has a comfortable amount of concave shaping, which provides plenty of grip in combination with the 10 grub-screw type pins on each side. Even set at their maximum height we couldn't feel the pins through the soles of our shoes, even when we ditched our flat-specific shoes for trainers down at the pump track. The pedal body sits far enough from the crank arm that you can really make the most of the large 96x95mm platform too, even with wide feet or clumpy shoes.

The 5050s do well in thick mud, with the machined cutouts in the pedal body allowing dirt to fall through and keeping the surface slip-free. After a couple of months of daily hammering, the bearings are still running smoothly too, and they're easy to replace. Removing two long Torx T25 bolts splits the pedal in half, giving access to the easy-to-rebuild internals – a redesigned axle spinning on a needle roller bearing and a cartridge bearing. The five-year warranty helps with peace of mind too. **JAKE**



ALSO TAKE  
A LOOK AT

▲ **FOR £23 MORE TRY:**  
DMR Vault £99.99  
[www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk)

▼ **FOR £17 LESS TRY:**  
Shimano Saint MX80 £59.99  
[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)

**MBUK**  
Putting past CrankBros durability problems behind them, these are high-end pedals at a competitive price  
★★★★★







# MBUK WRECKED & RATED

Brand New Kit

## THE SMALL STUFF MTB BITS AND PIECES

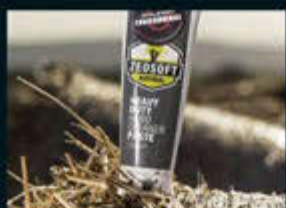


### SYNCROS TAILOR CAGE 1.5 RIGHT BOTTLE CAGE

£10.99 **Syncros**  
www.syncros.com

Even over really rough terrain, our bottle stayed nice and secure inside the Tailor Cage 1.5. This model favours those who use their right hand to grab their bottle, but we found it worked fine using our left hand too. Getting the bottle in and out is a doddle too. **ROB**

MBUK ★★★★★



### ZEOSOFT HAND CLEANER

£6.99 (300g) **Raleigh**  
www.raleigh.co.uk

Zeosoft's sandy sludge turns into a thick grinding paste that scours chain oil and grease out of your skin. Rinse off with water (you'll only need to re-apply on the thickest, most ingrained filth) and you're good to go. No irritation or skin cracking with extended use either. **GUY**

MBUK ★★★★★



### ZÉFAL CRANK ARMOUR

£5.99 **Chicken Cycle Kit**  
www.chickencycles.co.uk

These impact resistant, soft rubber guards will help stop the ends of your crank arms getting banged up. They're compatible with all but a few boutique cranks (we've checked our test bike fleet) and at 20g are both wallet and scales friendly. **MATT**

MBUK ★★★★★



## Ritchey WCS Trail saddle

£83 **Paligap** www.paligap.co

**AT 262G** THE WCS (World Championship Series) Trail isn't super-light but then it's not overly girthy either. Ignore the racing pedigree hinted at by the UCI World Champs rainbow stripes though – this is a saddle designed for cruising trails all day, and at that it's actually very good.

The broad rear offers plenty of room and support while the seat is long enough to allow you to winch forward for steep climbing efforts. Its Vector Wing design claims to alleviate

pressure on your nether regions and things do stay comfortable on longer rides. The titanium alloy rails have been strong enough to see off a few less than graceful 'landings' too, while the shell is reinforced with carbon for added strength and weight saving.

This is definitely a saddle that feels most at home on long spins, and it's that comfort and great build quality that make it a hit. **RIC**

MBUK ★★★★★



## SKF Fox 36 fork seal kit

£24.95 **TWS GB** www.tws.gb.co.uk

**SKF'S LOW-FRICTION** seal kits are available for most popular suspension forks. We tested the Fox 36 version, which also fits other forks with 36mm legs and comes in £3 cheaper than Fox's own replacement seal kit (£28). The seals are best fitted with a correctly sized seal press tool. With this, fitting is easy and the whole procedure takes less than half an hour. Once in place, there's no obvious friction to be felt when getting the fork moving, and they should make even more of a difference on forks such as the RockShox Boxxer, where each SKF seal replaces two original seals. **JAKE**

MBUK ★★★★★

## Pearl Izumi X-Project 3.0 shoes

£129.99 **Madison** www.madison.co.uk



**THE X-PROJECT 3.0S** have been designed to combine efficient pedalling on the bike with easy walking off it. That first attribute comes courtesy of a stiff carbon composite shank that, combined with the secure three-strap closure, makes it easy to put the power down.

Large mesh sections keep sweat at bay (but cancel out winter use), the materials mould nicely to your feet and at 450g per shoe they're a good weight. The hike-a-bike credentials look good too, with deep, rubber-

tipped tread blocks and impact-absorbing foam at the rear. We suffered bad heel slip even on short push-ups – though never when pedalling – but fit is always personal, and we'd already had to size up from our usual 44.5 to a 46. The deep tread and narrow cleat channel meant we also had to fit cleat spacers to ensure clean entry and exit, and it would be good if the cleat could be set further back too. **JCW**

MBUK ★★★★★



BRAND NEW KIT



## Howies Bib Shorts

£59 Howies [www.howies.co.uk](http://www.howies.co.uk)

**HOWIES' 3/4-LENGTH** bib shorts are an exercise in how to strip a product back to basics and focus on quality production methods. They're made from only four panels, so seams are kept to an absolute minimum, making for an incredibly comfortable fit. A clever weave means that less dense, more breathable sections are created within the same piece of material too. The small amount of flatlock stitching is well

positioned to eradicate any chafing, making these our go-to bib shorts for any ride, from the daily commute to multi-day bikepacking epics. The chamois offers just the right amount of cushioning without being too bulky and is finished with an antibacterial treatment. Throw in a discrete stash pocket and the price seems very reasonable. **MATT**

**MBUK** ★★★★★

**RACE  
FACE**

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With performance enhancing chain retention tooth profile technology.

"If you're going to buy a new single ring for your bike, make sure it's this one"



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104 BCD / 6 colour options

SRP: From £44.95

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## Dainese Oak Evo knee guards

£54.95 Windwave [www.windwave.co.uk](http://www.windwave.co.uk)

**DON'T BE PUT** off by the lack of fancy foam or acronyms here – the Oak Evos offer plenty of coverage and a good level of protection, especially considering their wallet-friendly price tag.

The clever articulated design means pedalling remains free and easy, even when perched on a downhill bike with a low saddle. It also means the knee and upper shin guards stay exactly where they need to be. We had no major slippage or excessive movement, even when sweating buckets (the Oaks are pretty warm and don't take long to get clammy).

The upper and lower Velcro straps help with security too. We found that keeping the lower strap done up tightly and hooked over the calf muscle was the comfiest and most secure way to keep the pads in place. We had a couple of crashes during testing and the Oaks stayed put, providing ample protection.

If possible, we'd recommend trying them for size before shelling out – our medium pads fitted reasonably well but the breathable mesh sleeve at the rear was a little baggy and the lower Velcro strap wouldn't have gone much tighter. **ROB**



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▲ **FOR £30 MORE TRY:**  
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[www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk)

▼ **FOR £25 LESS TRY:**  
iXS Hammer £29.99  
[www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

The Oaks offer decent protection and plenty of coverage at a nice price. Try before buying to get the sizing spot on





# MINI PUMPS

### Why upgrade...?

"A good pump will last for years and get you out of many tight spots. We've tested a wide range, both in the field and with a two-minute inflation test. These are the top six."



£29.99

### Lezyne Pressure Drive Small

Upgrade Bikes [www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk)

**SO GOOD...** Weighing just 90g and measuring 18cm long, this is the most compact pump in this group. The air hose is housed in one end and threads into the other for use. Select one end of the hose for Presta valves and the other for Schrader – this design makes it simple to select the desired valve type, and high pressures can be reached.

**NO GOOD...** Managing just 28psi in two minutes, the Pressure Drive Small is the slowest inflator here (by a small margin), but a larger 'Medium' version is available for the same price. The valve connector doesn't turn independently of the pump, which makes attaching it to the valve fiddly.

MBUK ★★☆☆☆



£16

### Airwave Motion Floor Mount

Hotlines [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**SO GOOD...** At 169g and 29cm, the Airwave is the most compact mini floor pump here, and it's only slightly bulkier than the handheld options. The quick-release valve head works well, being faster and easier to install than the screw-in options. Thanks to the footplate and T-shaped handle, inflation is straightforward and relatively effortless, and it's possible to reach quite high air pressures.

**NO GOOD...** Able to inflate our test tyre to 36psi in two minutes, it's only slightly faster (if less fatiguing) than the handheld pumps for low-pressure duties. Also, it's fiddly to change between valve types.

MBUK ★★☆☆☆



£13.99

### Zéfal Air Profil FCO1

Chicken CycleKit [www.chickencycles.co.uk](http://www.chickencycles.co.uk)

**SO GOOD...** The high-volume, two-stage telescopic cylinder of the Zéfal makes inflation swift for a handheld pump – it was able to reach 34psi in our two-minute test. The valve connector unscrews from the air hose and can be reversed to easily change valve type. At 113g and 20cm long, it's only slightly bulkier than the other hand pumps here, and about half the price, making it our deserving Value winner.

**NO GOOD...** The valve connector doesn't rotate independently of the pump, making it fiddly to screw on to the valve. The Air Profil is only rated to 87psi, so it won't do double duties if you have a road bike too.

MBUK ★★☆☆☆



£30

### Axiom Enforceair HV

Paligap [www.paligap.co](http://www.paligap.co)

**SO GOOD...** Size matters with pumps. The biggest pump on test also has the highest inflation rate, managing an impressive 61psi in two minutes. Although it lacks the double chamber of the Truflo, the high-volume cylinder ensures rapid inflation, the T-handle and footplate helping this along. The valve head turns independently of the long air hose and can be switched easily between Presta and Schrader modes.

**NO GOOD...** At 232g and 34cm, it's the bulkiest pump here, making it hard to justify unless you're expecting lots of punctures. The high-volume cylinder makes inflation above 50psi hard work too.

MBUK ★★★★★



£24.99

### Topeak RaceRocket

Extra (UK) [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)

**SO GOOD...** Weighing just 95g and measuring 18cm long, the Topeak is only 5g heavier than the lightest pump in this test but it was able to reach a slightly superior 30psi in our two-minute test. The valve connector is neatly designed too. The hose extends and you select Schrader or Presta mode by twisting the valve lock, which screws on to the valve without you needing to rotate the whole pump. High pressures can be achieved if you're patient.

**NO GOOD...** It's not the fastest inflator here, so the name is a little misleading, but at this price and size that's to be expected. The valve lock can be a little fiddly too.

MBUK ★★★★★



£29.99

### Truflo Minitrack

Madison [www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)

**SO GOOD...** This beast packs a punch. Thanks to its two-stage mechanism, T-handle and foot stirrup, it was able to comfortably inflate our tyre to a respectable 58psi in the allotted two minutes. The double-headed screw-on valve connector works equally well for both Presta and Schrader valve types. The nifty pop-out pressure gauge – which is accurate to within 2psi according to our digital pressure meter – is a real coup at this price too.

**NO GOOD...** At 30cm long and 214g, the Minitrack isn't exactly pocket-sized, and the pop-out mechanism for the pressure gauge feels a little flimsy.

MBUK ★★★★★







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crankbrothers



*Curtis Keene*  
pro: rider curtis keene

### the mallet 3

"Riding crankbrothers has always been a natural and easy decision for me. The continuity between myself and the pedals along with the performance – it's a win-win on all levels." **Curtis Keene**

lightweight / 443g per pair / 4-sided entry  
6 adjustable pins per side / superior mud shedding  
6° float / 15° or 20° release angle

backed by an industry leading 5-year warranty.







With a new shock and wheels fitted, Jake's Myst is ready for a pounding on the DH tracks of North Wales

## JAKE'S SARACEN MYST PRO

**£2,999.99** Saracen [www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)



**Since getting back** from New Zealand the Saracen has had a much easier time of it, especially because those couple of months without a trail bike have made me a lot keener to get out and pedal more! Still, old Myst-dawg hasn't been neglected. I've fitted some new wheels to replace the battered pair that came back from NZ, and I've swapped the stock shock for a RockShox Vivid R2C.

The original (and very basic) Fox Van RC was great at slow speeds but when I opened up the throttle I found I could only achieve sensitivity at the rear at the expense of support through the stroke, which really started to get my goat!

Despite a lot of experimenting with settings in NZ I couldn't find a compromise I was happy with. Luckily the Vivid R2C that I bolted on to my Specialized Demo last year slotted straight in, and the issue disappeared immediately.

The Vivid gives smooth and predictable performance, with enough support that you can ride really heavily pushing through your feet and not have to fear the consequences! This extra support at the rear has made me realise that I need more support up front too. I'm already running the hardest coil spring in the Boxer so I think an air-sprung fork is the way to go.

Wheel wise, I've fitted some Novatec Diablos, which were easy to set up tubeless

and have shrugged off some seriously hard dings even with the tyres at very low pressures. I'm looking forward to spending some more time on them to see if I can find any weaknesses.

I've had some reliability issues with the Shimano M615 disc brakes, but I can't hold anything against them because until now these budget stoppers have remained maintenance free despite months of abuse at home and abroad.

I'm off on more DH days this month, with Antur Stiniog and Revolution Bike Park on the menu, as well as a sneaky uplift day at Llangollen, so the Saracen's life isn't going to get any easier, especially as I try to really get that suspension dialled.



# MBUK Machines

We ride these long-term test bikes hard for a year, constantly scrutinising new kit, to bring you nothing but the truth about their performance



Rob's been enjoying the dry and dusty trails – when his brakes work

## ROB'S PIVOT PHOENIX

£2,700 (frame only) Upgrade Bikes [www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk)



**After a spell** of good weather and a day at Tidworth Freeride in Wiltshire, I'm glad I never got around to swapping out the Phoenix's Bontrager G4 tyres. With the trails dry and dusty, the G4s have been in their element – flick to page 102 to read my full review.

The rest of the Pivot has been working well too, for the most part at least. I definitely have the feel of the bike dialled now. The

front and rear suspension feels well balanced, the CrankBros bar is comfortable and the Spank stem just the right length. The only niggle is the Shimano Saint brakes. Don't get me wrong, they're top performers. But leave the bike for a few weeks with no use and the pads need a bit of attention to get them back to their former glory.

I forgot to give the callipers and rotors a good soaking with water the other day. After overshooting a jump into a

berm, I was unable to scrub off enough speed to make the turn and was shot over the berm and into the foliage just off to the side of the track, where I hit my back against a tree. Not pleasant. Once I'd dowsed the brakes in water, normal service was resumed.

After some hard and slightly sideways landings, I'm pleased to report that the back end of the bike is still running smoothly, with no creaks or groans from the DW-Link pivots.

## GUY'S WHYTE T-130 SX

£1,999 Whyte Bikes <http://whyte.bike/gb>



**SRAM and Shimano** have introduced cheaper 1x11 set-ups (GX and XT) but you're looking at the far side of £300 to make a full transmission swap. This means single-ring conversions aren't going to get any less popular – especially kits like the one I've just installed from Wolf Tooth, which is more 'glamping' than 'ghetto'. The Specialized post that replaced the original X-Fusion unit has proved impressively reliable and the WTB Trail Boss tyres are back in their element as the trails dry out. The Suntour fork really does need a service though. »



Guy's been having a blast on his newly single-ringed T-130





Is the future electronic? That's what Rob's hoping to find out with the super-pricey Spark 700 Ultimate

## ROB'S SCOTT SPARK 700 ULTIMATE DI2

£8,499 **Scott Sports**

[www.scott-sports.com](http://www.scott-sports.com)



**Did you spit** out your coffee when you read the price?

Yeah, I did too. Why have such a super-bling bike in our long-term line-up? It's so we

can put the miles in on Shimano's new XTR Di2 transmission, see for ourselves what benefits – if any – electronic shifting brings to the trail and let you guys know the score.

The Spark 700 Ultimate seemed to be the perfect test bed, thanks in part to the way Scott have integrated the Di2 battery into the top tube, placing it out of harm's way behind the upper shock mount. The bike also features a new, electronically controlled version of the Swiss brand's TwinLoc controlled adjustable suspension system. Instead of the normal long lever there's a slick little slider next to the grip that lets you easily adjust the Fox 32 Float iCTD fork and eNude iCTCD shock.

I've still got to explore the various shifting options fully but I'm already impressed by the Syncro Shift mode. This allows you to use just the right-hand shifter and moves the front mech automatically when you start shifting into the really low gears at the back. This, for me, is the best bit about Di2, because although the rest of the shifting is as slick and efficient as you'd expect from XTR, I can't get my head around why we as mountain bikers need electronic gear changes, and the thought of writing off a £400 Di2 rear mech brings tears to my eyes.



### RIC'S VITUS SOMMET VRX

£2,699.99 **Vitus Bikes** [www.vitusbikes.com](http://www.vitusbikes.com)



**I've swapped to** a wider and lighter cockpit this month – a Renthal Fatbar Carbon, Apex stem and pre-loved pair of their Kevlar grips. A trip to the Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup back home in Northern Ireland resulted in 29th place in Masters. A couple of years ago I'd have been over the moon with that but a top 10 finish would have been on the cards had I not winded myself, done a sick and then rolled the second half of stage three. In the words of every loser ever, that's racing!



### JIMMER'S MARIN MOUNT VISION C-XM8

£3,500 **Paligap** [www.paligap.cc](http://www.paligap.cc)



**I've been busy** doing some suspension fiddling this month, fitting a large volume spacer inside the Fox Float CTD rear shock and making an even bigger change up front, replacing the skinny Fox 32 fork with the 34 I had on last year's long-term. The suspension is now way more progressive feeling, letting me hit bigger drops without bottoming out while still tracking well over roots and rocks, and the bike can be ridden much harder. R2 and I are bonding well now.



### MATT'S SURLLY ICE CREAM TRUCK OPS

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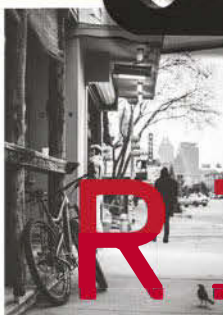


**A big off** resulting in broken ribs has meant some time out of the saddle. It was a frustrating end to a cracking day that saw the confidence that comes with big rubber and 100mm of mighty RockShox Bluto travel lull me out of my comfort zone. A classic case of ambition outweighing skill! Until the crash I'd been enjoying the newly 'trail centred up' ICT, especially the Fox DOSS post – it's still working fine after two years and the long lever works well with my Grip Shift set-up.



# GX

1x11  
2x11  
2x10



# RIDE YOUR WAY

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Jonny's already been getting some serious air on his fuschia flying machine

## JONNY'S NS SODA SLOPE

£1,849.99 **Hotlines** [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)



**Let's be clear,** I didn't pick this bike for the colour! Though it certainly divides office opinion, I've slowly come around to the pink and purple paint scheme, even if my niece Daisy proclaimed, "you've got a girl's bike" when she first saw it.

I was really keen to try out a slopestyle bike this year, mostly because I wanted to see just how versatile it could be, but also because, at just over £1,800, you've either got to be a pretty serious amateur comp rider to justify buying a bike like this or, like me, a slightly older, less flexible dirt jump guy who should really know better.

I've already noticed the rear shock saving me a couple of times, during trips to

Ribbesford Bike Park and Tidworth Freeride. Even at its max pressure of 275psi it softens those cases and heavy landings that, on a hardtail, would send shockwaves through my back, leaving me aching and moaning for days after.

At 14.9kg (32.8lb) she's a tad hefty for the BMX track but the weight is well balanced and when she's pointed downhill it's not massively noticeable. In the longer term, I think it may be worth swapping out the Truvativ Ruktion cranks and BB and the NS/Octane One wheels, because they're not the lightest.

I wasn't expecting much from the Marzocchi 55 CR Slope fork after riding the Italian company's DJ3 on the NS Movement

I reviewed in issue 315, but the two are worlds apart in terms of performance. After a few tweaks to the spring pressure and compression and rebound damping, the 55 is performing exactly as a dirt jump fork should, only soaking up the bigger hits and standing up in its travel with plenty of support on take-offs. I'd like to try a couple of other forks though, just to see how they measure up and drop a little more weight.

My plans for the Soda also include sticking gears on it to have a go at 4X racing and perhaps even a downhill race at the Forest of Dean. For the most part though it'll be on evening duty while I visit all the pump tracks around Bristol and Bath while the sun is shining.



# RIP IT UP TEAR IT DOWN



## ZENITH

### HOODED SOFTSHELL & SHORTS

Sambo's rocking the Zenith hooded softshell and shorts. Built strong to cope with the rough British trails, the Zenith collection features stretch fabrics for maximum movement and water repellent to bead off the worst of the trail grime.

SAM DALE | Credit: Laurence Grosman-Ennis

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**MBUK**

# WRECKED & RATED

## Bike Test

BIKES FOR UNDER A GRAND

**£800-£1,000**



### THE LINE-UP



**NORCO CHARGER 7.1**  
£800



**SCOTT SCALE 760**  
£899



**BOARDMAN FS TEAM  
650B** £999.99



**GENESIS LONGITUDE**  
£999.99



Words Seb Rogers Pics Steve Bahr

# BEST BIKES ON A £1,000 BUDGET



## THE TESTER

### Seb Rogers

Seb's been testing bikes for MBUK for 19 years, making him the ideal candidate to sort the winners from the also-rans among this motley crew.

**F**or a lot of people, £1,000 is a huge sum to spend on a bike. It's also difficult to know where to spend your money – should you buy a hardtail, a full-sus or even a fully rigid bike? And should you go for a purebred mountain bike or a machine that can do double duties for commuting?

The good news is that, if you're a UK resident for tax purposes and pay tax through the PAYE scheme, you should be eligible for the Cycle to Work scheme. This lets you buy a new bike – generally costing up to £1,000 – at a significant discount.

How does this government backed scheme work? Your

employer buys the bike on your behalf and you repay them via 'salary sacrifice' – a regular monthly payment. At the end of the 'loan' period you can buy the bike outright by agreeing a 'fair market value' for it. Because the repayments come straight out of your wage, you pay less tax and national insurance. This means you can save at least 25 per cent off the ticket price of a new bike and accessories.

That still leaves the tricky decision of what type of bike to pick, which is why we've rounded up four very different mountain bikes for under £1,000 to work out which would make the best buy. »



## Bike Test

SUB-GRAND BIKES  
£800-£1,000

### WEIGHTY ISSUES

Weight is about average for a hardtail at this price, but it's enough to seriously blunt the potential of the 760's designed-for-speed geometry

### REMOTELY INTERESTING

If you're going to have a fork with a lockout, it helps if it's easy to use. Kudos to Scott for spec'ing a bar-mounted remote

### NUMBERS GAME

The Scale 760 may be reasonably priced but it has identical geometry to the carbon, race-bred, £5500 Scale 700 SL

# SCOTT SCALE 760

**£899** Stripped-down junior racer has podium-placing DNA

### SO GOOD

True thoroughbred geometry inherited from XC race proven designs

Reliable component choices mean no nasty surprises

### NO GOOD

Too heavy to make the best of its race-bred geometry

Beginners may take time to adapt to the low front end



### JARGON BUSTER

#### Lockout

Lever or dial on a suspension fork or rear shock that prevents it from compressing – useful for climbs and sprints.

**A**ffordable hardtails typically sit in a sub-family of their own in a brand's hierarchy, borrowing design features from higher up the range and cutting costs on kit. Scott's Scale range is a little different in that respect though. The £899 760 sits one rung from the bottom of the Scale line-up but it shares its cross-county race-inspired geometry – in every detail – with the £5,500 Scale 700 SL. Whether that's a good thing – and how much has been lost in translation – is what we're here to find out.

## The frame

Numbers on an engineering drawing aside, the Scale 760's chassis is – as you'd expect – a world away from the super-light carbon concoction of the 700 SL. Good ol' 6061 aluminium is the frame material of choice here, served up with some neat design touches that help set it apart from the herd of 'me too' alu hardtails.

Taking its inspiration from the XC race-bred Scale range-toppers, stiffness – in terms of both pedalling input and steering accuracy – is the 760's key attribute. To that end, Scott's designers have built the

frame around a massive oval down tube, which is welded to a notably short, tapered head tube. Occupying the entire width of the bottom bracket shell at one end and wrapping almost halfway around the head tube at the other, this supersize down tube is a formidable piece of tubing that should ensure that every ounce of the rider's effort is translated into forward progress.

Out back, some nifty dropout design tucks the rear brake calliper neatly inboard of both the chainstays and seatstays, while a minimalist seatstay bridge gives plenty of mud clearance up top (which, disappointingly, isn't matched at the bottom bracket). Two bottle cage mounts will keep wannabe racers well hydrated, but – as you'd expect on a bike with racing DNA – there are no rack mounts to help with the weekday commute.

Steering duties are handled by RockShox's venerable XC 30 air fork, with 100mm (3.9in) of travel. The good news is that Scott have even found room in the budget for a tidy handlebar-mounted remote lever, which transforms the lockout function from a tick-box gimmick into something that's genuinely useful,

whether racing or not, for those times when you forget to unlock before hitting a descent.

## The equipment

We wouldn't have been surprised to see a 2x10 transmission here, but the Scale's traditional triple-chainring set-up has big-wheel (650b) friendly gearing that gains it a small advantage at the top end over the double-ring alternative.

Spec sheet watchers will love the Shimano XT rear mech upgrade, but in practical terms we're more impressed with the large, descent-friendly 180mm brake rotor up front. A low stance and wide, flat bar complete the race-orientated rider set-up, and the Maxxis Ikon tyres offer a good blend of pace and float at the expense of grip in the mud.

## The ride

Sub-£1,000 hardtails don't generally get to share their geometry with podium-topping carbon exotica, and on that front alone, the Scale 760 has top bragging rights at the trailhead. Its more expensive counterparts may trim 30 per cent or so off the 760's all-up weight, but the dots joining all the





## THE GEOMETRY TRANSLATES INTO A LOW, STRETCHED-OUT RIDE POSITION THAT EMPHASISES EFFICIENT POWER DELIVERY

components are in exactly the same place. On the trail that translates into a low, stretched-out ride position that emphasises efficient power delivery to the rear wheel. Riders who've come over from road bikes are likely to feel at home – it's a similar position to riding on the brake hoods. With a flat back and the arms bearing more upper body weight, it's a tried-and-tested formula for squeezing the most out of a rider's heart, lungs and legs.

The trouble with this no-compromise approach is twofold on

the 760. First, without the low weight – and particularly the fast-accelerating wheels – of the bikes that inspired its layout, the 760 comes across as more bark than bite. It's no surprise that it doesn't surge forward in the way you'd expect a race bike to – after all, it is very reasonably priced. But still, in performance terms it bears about as much relation to the high-end Scales as an entry-level hatchback does to a Nürburgring-tuned race car.

Second, it's just not as comfortable – or as fun – as a bike with slightly less

steep geometry. The low front end makes it harder to pop over obstacles and, on steep descents, it's that bit trickier to look far enough ahead to pick a line. We like the lighter Scales, so if you're racing on a tight budget the 760 is worth a look, but for trail riding there are easier-handling options. »

**MBUK**

There's no doubting Scott's race-winning Scale geometry works, but it feels out of place on a bike like this





# OUTLAST THE TRAIL



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With  
**CONEHEAD™**  
Protection System





**ROOM FOR THREE**

Epic mud clearance means you can run 3in tyres – if you swap the triple crankset for a single chainring set-up

**PERMANENTLY SPRINGLESS**

Thinking of swapping the rigid fork for suspension? Think again. The Longitude's geometry isn't designed for the length of a suspension fork

**BOSS IT**

Few bikes boast as many threaded bosses as this one. Whatever rack, guard or mount you want to bolt on, you probably can

# GENESIS LONGITUDE

**£999.99**

*Expedition-ready load-lugger with genuine appeal*

## SO GOOD

Simple, low-maintenance design lends itself to year-round riding or long-distance touring

Surprisingly good handling and exceptional mud clearance

**NO GOOD**

No suspension fork – and no option to upgrade – won't suit everyone

Surprisingly modest spec for the money

## JARGON BUSTER

**Crud Catcher**

UK-designed front mudguard that attaches under the down tube to keep mud and spray out of the rider's face

There's a glaring omission from the Longitude's spec sheet that even a casual observer won't take too long to notice – there's no suspension fork. Once you've picked yourself off the floor at this apparent oversight on nearly a grand's worth of bike, consider this – few manufacturers offer expedition-ready bikes in their range, let alone at a price this affordable. The simple, solid build, combined with all those rack mounts, could be exactly what's needed if you choose to use it for year-round commuting as well as weekend off-roading. Worth a closer look? We thought so...

## The frame

Everything about the Longitude is different from the norm, right down to the choice of steel (rather than the ubiquitous aluminium) for the plumbing. Why steel? On a bike that may find itself halfway up an Andean mountain loaded to the gunnels, it makes sense – a broken steel frame is much easier to mend than a frame made of anything else. A village blacksmith could probably do it.

The skinny steel tubes also made it simpler for the designers to build in

enough mud room to fit 3in tyres, both front and rear. Yes, you read that right – a full 3in, although you'd have to ditch the triple crankset for a single ring because there isn't enough clearance for the front mech. With the stock 2.4in tyres there's enough mud clearance to fit an entire muddy field between stays and tyre.

Curiously for a bike with more braze-on mounts than you can shake a shop full of bolt-on accessories at, there are no Crud Catcher mounts. That's the only omission though. Want a front rack? No problem. Rear rack and mudguard? Yep. Three bottle cages? Check. Fit a pair of slick tyres and appropriate rackage and you've got a rugged, no-nonsense commuter or tourer.

The fork will raise eyebrows – after all, why would you not want suspension? It's a fair point, but this is a bike that's designed to be as simple and maintenance-free as possible. So much so that Genesis haven't even built the frame with suspension-corrected geometry – so you can't upgrade to a suspension fork without ruining the handling. Genesis say it's so they could tailor the frame and fork to work as a complete package,

reducing the length of the fork legs to allow narrower tapered blades for a more forgiving ride.

## The equipment

Anyone expecting a hop-up in the component spec in exchange for the lack of suspension is in for a disappointment. The Shimano Deore transmission won't get anyone excited at this price, though it's plenty reliable enough, while the TRP mechanical disc brakes – another touch aimed at easy maintenance on long-haul trips – lack the progressive feel and bite of most mid-range hydraulics. The wide 35mm rims and 2.4in tyres work well to provide plenty of grip and float at lower pressures than you'd normally run though, and the radically swept back handlebar gives a natural feeling ride position that'll make you wonder why more bikes aren't specced that way.

## The ride

With its long top tube, swept-back bar and easy-rolling, 29in wagon wheels, the Longitude quickly demolishes any concerns that it's going to be a harsh handful on the trail. Weight distribution is spot-on and the





## PROGRESS IS A BIT SLOWER THAN ON A HARDTAIL WITH A DECENT FORK, BUT THERE'S VERY LITTLE THE LONGITUDE WON'T TAKE IN ITS STRIDE

chunky Continental X-King tyres deliver all the grip you'll need, whatever the terrain. The big wheels and comparatively laidback geometry mean the Longitude is never going to be the quickest of singletrack slayers, but it's adept at doing what Genesis designed it for – devouring big chunks of trail mile after mile, day after day, with no fuss.

You'll definitely feel the lack of suspension, but it's worth remembering that all mountain bikes

used to be made this way. The constant chatter of feedback from the fork takes a little getting used to but it's easy to modify your riding style. You soon learn to read the trail a bit further ahead, pick the line of least resistance and use your upper body to help finesse the front end over and through the worst of the obstacles.

It makes progress a bit slower than on a hardtail with a decent suspension fork, but there's very little that the Longitude won't take in its stride –

and there's nothing to beat the feeling of satisfaction of a tricky line cleared with no sprung assistance.

It won't suit everyone, but the Longitude offers a genuine low-maintenance alternative to the host of hardtails out there. »

**MBUK**

The Longitude swims against the tide, but the result is a likeable and versatile – if utilitarian – trail bike





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**GEARED UP**

The Boardman's gearing is well suited to blasting through fast, flat terrain, but not so great for winching up steep climbs

**DROPPING IN**

Props to Boardman for including neat cable routing for a remote-operated dropper post upgrade – great news if you like to ride steeps

**SHIMANO OR SRAM**

There's little to choose in function between the 'big S' component makers, but Shimano's low-budget kit lasts better than SRAM's in our experience

# BOARDMAN FS TEAM 650B

**£999.99**
*Value-packed full-susser that adds up to a great ride*
**SO GOOD**

Tidy-handling 130mm trail full-susser at a total bargain price

Good spec for the money

**NO GOOD**

A few minor niggles, including the tall gearing and weight

The Boardman range has always offered a lot of bike for relatively little outlay, but even by this brand's standards the FS Team 650b looks like a steal. A 2x10 SRAM transmission, 130mm (5.1in) of RockShox powered, air sprung travel at each end and a price tag that looks like a misprint make a powerful argument in favour of this budget full-susser. We know from experience that great spec doesn't necessarily translate into a great ride, so how does it fare out on the trail?

## The frame

There's little point trying to reinvent the wheel when you're setting out to build a usable full-susser at a sensible price. Sure enough, Boardman's design team have sensibly opted for a tried-and-tested four-bar, Horst Link suspension set-up. The chainstay pivot – named after its inventor, Horst Leitner – helps isolate pedal and brake forces from the rear suspension, while a top-tube-mounted shock is driven via a linkage anchored to the end of the chunky, bridgeless seatstays.

Thanks to the bridgeless design, mud clearance up top is epic – always

a plus for UK riding. The front end joins triple-butted main tubes with smoothed, welded joints that ape the appearance of the carbon zeitgeist (though with none of the weight saving attributes, obviously). Cables run externally in full-length housings. This makes maintenance easy at the expense of a slightly cluttered appearance, though we're going to give Boardman full credit for including top tube routing for a cable-operated dropper post, should you want to upgrade later down the line.

RockShox's evergreen Sektor fork and Monarch shock do the bump-eating thing at the front and rear respectively, offering 130mm of travel. Matched, big brand air shocks on a bike at this price are a pleasant surprise, offering decent performance and basic adjustability to cope with different rider weights and styles. The fork has a lockout too, though – unsurprisingly, for this money – there's no way to adjust the compression damping at either end.

## The equipment

The Boardman's stop and go controls all come courtesy of SRAM. The basic DB3 hydraulic brakes do the job,

while the X7 and X5 mechs provide clean shifts when they're new but tend not to wear as well as Shimano's budget mechs in our experience. The 2x10 gearing keeps things simple and shaves a tiny bit of weight, but the 27/42t chainring makes the FS Team slightly overgeared for newcomers to mountain biking – though the taller gearing would come in handy on flatter, faster trails or the daily commute.

## The ride

That Boardman have managed to produce an air sprung, 130mm travel trail bike with no glaring compromises for under a grand is remarkable in itself. That it also rides well is little short of astonishing. The roomy cockpit makes it easy to get stretched out and comfy, while geometry that's more or less in line with current trail bike trends translates into a bike that'll do what you ask of it without fuss.

Shock and fork set-up is quick and easy, and the plush and compliant rear end keeps the back wheel planted and driving forward even on stutter-bump infested technical climbs. Descents are, as you'd expect, noticeably faster and easier to

**JARGON BUSTER**
**2x10**

A drivetrain that has a double chainring up front and 10 sprockets on the rear cassette, to give a good spread of gear ratios.





## THE PLUSH AND COMPLIANT REAR END KEEPS THE BACK WHEEL PLANTED EVEN ON STUTTER-BUMP INFESTED TECHNICAL CLIMBS

negotiate – and therefore more fun – than on a price-equivalent hardtail. There are a few niggles though.

We'd prefer a slightly wider bar for muscling through high speed, rocky singletrack – the accurate-steering fork is crying out for it. On a bike so capable, we'd like to see a slightly slacker head angle too – it would mean we could fully unleash its potential through the faster technical sections where this bike yearns to be ridden

hard. It's heavy too, with a weight penalty of at least 1.5kg over the hardtail competition, though the ground-sucking rear and reasonable wheel weight help disguise most of the extra heft once you're rolling.

Out-of-the-saddle efforts lead to pedal bob, which, with no low-speed compression adjustment, can't be tamed – 'sit and spin' is the way to go. Factor in the too-tall gearing and it might seem as though we're a bit

down on the Boardman, but we're not. These niggles are all fairly minor though – and not enough to detract from what's a heck of a lot of bike for not very much money. We doubt you can have more fully-suspended fun for £1,000. »

**MBUK**

Boardman have produced a genuinely likeable mid-travel full-susser at a price that looks like a misprint





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Atlas Kneepads are designed for reliable protection, no matter where the trail takes you. Lightweight, flexible, and with a tall leg cuff to lock-in the fit, Atlas provides a piece of mind that encourages exploration over new dirt – even if the trail's a little hairier than you expected. [Specialized.com](https://www.specialized.com)





## Bike Test

SUB-GRAND BIKES  
£800-£1,000

### RACKED UP

If your bike needs to do double duty for the weekday commute, don't underestimate the value of being able to use a pannier rack

### HEADS UP

A decent length head tube keeps the handlebar height at the right level for good all-round handling without nasty surprises

### GEAR DOWN

The 2x10 transmission simplifies gear selection, but at the expense of taller ratios for fast road riding

# NORCO CHARGER 7.1

**£800** *Good value Canadian cross-country contender*

### SO GOOD

Handling blends fun and stability in just the right way for day-long trail adventures

Decent component blend, with added rack mount versatility

### NO GOOD

Would be even better with a longer, more accurate steering fork



### JARGON BUSTER

#### Bottom bracket shell

The short tube housing the axle and bearings at the junction of the down tube, seat tube and chainstays.

Sitting at the top of Norco's budget XC hardtail range, the Charger 7.1's distinctive looks aren't the only thing that make it stand out. With an air-sprung fork and 2x10 Shimano Deore based transmission – pimped up by an SLX rear mech upgrade – it offers a fair chunk of componentry bling for your pound, and there's still £200 left in your £1K budget for some accessories. But how well does it perform?

### The frame

Few things inspire more confidence for new riders than the ability to make a mistake on the trail without risking the family jewels. The Charger's radically sloped top tube follows a long tradition of Canadian hardtail design, giving its rider a precious inch or so of extra standover clearance. The seat tube has been extended – and braced with an extra tube – to keep the seatpost length within the realms of sanity.

A complex-profile down tube makes up the Charger's backbone, widening to a stiffness-enhancing rectangular section at the bottom bracket shell and curving where it joins the head tube to help disperse the stress from frontal impacts. The head tube isn't tapered

for extra steering precision, but that's no great loss on a bike at this level.

The seatstays and chainstays wriggle their way in ankle-clearing fashion from the seat tube and bottom bracket joints to the dropouts. There's plenty of mud clearance, largely thanks to extra dimples in the chainstays around the tyre, though the relatively slender stock tyres help in that department too. Rack mounts are a bonus for commuters or wannabe tourers, though there's only room in the compact front triangle for a single set of bottle cage mounts.

Holding up the front is RockShox's budget air-sprung XC 30 fork in 100mm (3.9in) travel trim. It's great to see an air fork, albeit a low-end one, on a budget hardtail – the adjustability over the cheaper coil alternatives makes a significant difference.

### The equipment

Tyre choice is a personal thing. The comparatively narrow and fast-rolling WTB Nanos are arguably a good choice for a bike that could see varied use, from the daily commute to weekend trail riding, but the limited air volume and shallow, close-spaced tread quickly show their limitations on

muddy, technical trails. If your ambitions are largely off-road, you'd do well to upgrade to some rubber that has more grip and bite.

The 2x10 transmission simplifies gear selection at the expense of some top-end gearing, which might be an issue, but for most off-road trails it's fine. We'd prefer a 180mm brake rotor up front for better cooling on long descents, but the Norco's 160mm discs will be fine unless you have a habit of brake-dragging.

### The ride

A mountain bike has to cope with a wide range of situations, from barely-above-walking-pace climbs to eye-watering descents, and a whole lot more besides. Finding the right geometry formula to tackle all those trail scenarios is a balancing act, and nowhere more so than with a bike that's quite likely to find itself in the hands of a relative newcomer to mountain biking.

Norco's design team have got the recipe spot on with the Charger 7.1. Although there's little on paper to separate this bike from more race-inspired hardtail designs, a sensibly proportioned head tube puts the



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## IN EVERY TRAIL SCENARIO FROM ROCKY CLIMBS TO FLOWING SINGLETRACK DESCENTS, THE CHARGER IS A WILLING ACCOMPLICE

handlebar at the right height for comfortable day-long rides without sacrificing handling precision or fun. We were initially concerned that the 85mm stem was a tad lanky, but paired with the fairly short 590mm top tube of our 18.5in frame, it turned out to be just the right side of too long.

In every trail scenario from low-speed, rocky and rooty climbs to fast, flowing singletrack descents, the Charger turns out to be a willing

accomplice. The limiting factor is the relatively basic, flexy and chattery fork. It'd be churlish to grumble too much – after all, we're just grateful to see a decent air fork on a bike at this price.

We've no doubt that a slightly longer travel, better damped and more accurate fork would set the Charger's potential free. Having said that, we'd then want a slightly slacker head angle and shorter stem... But let's not get carried away. As it stands, the Charger

7.1 achieves exactly what it sets out to do, which is to offer competent, fun and newbie-friendly trail performance. For a do-anything, go-anywhere bike at an incredible price, it's well worth a second look. »



It might not have a race-winning pedigree, but Norco's Charger 7.1 is a great trail all-rounder

**MBUK**



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Fast, wide and tubeless ready

## Raleigh ProBuild Trail and DH wheels.

### Hubs

The high quality Chosen hubs are perfect for any Trail or DH bike thanks to their lightweight 7075 Alloy construction and their patented MGC 120 point engagement freehub.

All axle variants and SRAM XD driver bodies available.

### Rims

Alex Volar 2.5 rims offer a fantastic strength to weight ratio, tubeless ready capability and a full 25mm internal width. This increased width offers an improved tyre profile when tyres of 2.3" or larger are used. This increases the amount of rubber you have in contact with the ground and also gives the tyre more stability by giving the bead a wider stance, it also dramatically decreases the chances of burping air from tubeless set ups when running lower pressures.

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Laced and trued at our in-house wheel building facility in Nottingham using the finest double butted Alpina racing spokes as standard.

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RRP - £205 per pair

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# THE SPEC DECK



## SCOTT SCALE 760

## GENESIS LONGITUDE

## BOARDMAN FS TEAM 650B

## NORCO CHARGER 7.1

PRICE	£899	£999.99	£999.99	£800
DISTRIBUTOR	<a href="http://www.scott-sports.com">www.scott-sports.com</a>	<a href="http://www.madison.co.uk">www.madison.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.halfords.com">www.halfords.com</a>	<a href="http://www.evanscycles.com">www.evanscycles.com</a>
WEIGHT	12.7kg (28lb) without pedals	13.1kg (28.9lb) without pedals	15.4kg (31.8lb) without pedals	12.7kg (28lb) without pedals
FRAME	6061 aluminium	Mjölir double butted chromoly	6061 aluminium	Aluminium
SIZES	XS, S, M (tested), L, XL	16, 17.5 (tested), 19, 20.5in	16, 18, 19in (tested)	13, 15, 17, 18.5 (tested), 20, 21.5in
FORK	RockShox XC30 Solo Air, 100mm (3.9in) travel	Genesis double butted chromoly unicrown, rigid	RockShox Sektor Solo Air, 130mm (5.1in) travel	RockShox XC 30 Gold Solo Air, 100mm (3.9in) travel
SHOCK	N/A	N/A	RockShox Monarch R, 130mm (5.1in) travel	N/A
HEADSET	VP semi integrated	FSA Orbit	FSA	FSA No.10
WHEELS	<b>Hubs:</b> Formula CL51 F, Shimano RM66 R <b>Rims:</b> Syncros GX19 <b>Spokes:</b> Black, plain gauge <b>Wheel weight:</b> 2.15kg F, 2.6kg R (including tyres)	<b>Hubs:</b> Shimano Deore <b>Rims:</b> Alex Supra35 <b>Spokes:</b> Double butted, stainless <b>Wheel weight:</b> 2.15kg F, 2.8kg R (including tyres)	<b>Hubs:</b> Unbranded <b>Rims:</b> Mavic XM319 <b>Spokes:</b> Black, plain gauge <b>Wheel weight:</b> 2.15kg F, 2.85kg R (including tyres)	<b>Hubs:</b> SRAM MTH-406 <b>Rims:</b> WTB SX19 27.5 <b>Spokes:</b> Black, plain gauge <b>Wheel weight:</b> 2.15kg F, 2.75kg R (including tyres)
TYRES	Maxxis Ikon, 27.5x2.2in	Continental X King, 29x2.4in	Continental X-King, 27.5x2.2in	WTB Nano, 27.5x2.1in
CRANKSET/BOTTOM BRACKET	Shimano M622, 24/30/40t/ Shimano	Shimano Deore, 22/30/40t/ Shimano	FSA Comet 386, 27/42t/ FSA MegaExo	Shimano Deore, 24/38t/ Shimano
DERAILLEURS	Shimano Deore F, Shimano Deore XT Shadow Plus R	Shimano Deore	SRAM X5 F, SRAM X7 Type 2 R	Shimano Deore F, Shimano SLX Shadow Plus R
SHIFTERS	Shimano Deore (3x10)	Shimano Deore (3x10)	SRAM X7 (2x10)	Shimano Deore (2x10)
CASSETTE/CHAIN	Shimano HG50, 11 36t/ KMC X10	Shimano HG50, 11 36t/ KMC X10	SRAM, 11-36t/ KMC X10	SRAM PG1020, 11-36t/ SRAM PG1031
BRAKES	Shimano M447 (hydraulic), 180/160mm	TRP Spyke (mechanical), 160/160mm	Avid DB3 (hydraulic), 170/160mm	Shimano M445 (hydraulic), 160/160mm
BAR/STEM/Grips	Syncros Tbar, 710mm/ Syncros, 80mm/ Syncros	Genesis Alt Riser, 725mm/ Genesis, 75mm/ unbranded lock on	Boardman E4P, 700mm/ Boardman E4P, 65mm/ Boardman lock-on	Norco Shallow Riser, 725mm/ Norco, 85mm/ Norco
SADDLE/SEATPOST	Syncros MTB Race/ Syncros	Genesis/ Genesis	Boardman E4P/ Boardman E4P	Norco XC/ Norco
DIMENSIONS				
FRAME ANGLES	Head 69° Seat 72.5°	Head 66.5° Seat 71°	Head 67.6° Seat 72°	Head 68.5° Seat 72°
VERDICT	<b>MBUK</b> ★★★★★ There's no doubting Scott's race-winning Scale geometry works, but it feels out of place on this bike	<b>MBUK</b> ★★★★★ The Longitude swims against the tide, but the result is a likeable and versatile – if utilitarian – trail bike	<b>MBUK</b> ★★★★★ Boardman have built a genuinely impressive mid-travel full-susser at a price that looks like a misprint	<b>MBUK</b> ★★★★★ It may lack the pedigree of some of its competitors, but Norco's Charger 7.1 is a great trail all-rounder

**WHAT OUR SCORES MEAN:** We give each bike one overall score to sum up how it performs and its value for money. If a bike gets a score of five, it really is the best you can get in terms of both

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Poor: simply put, don't bother    ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Below average: flawed in some way    ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Good: it'll do the job and do it well    ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Very good: one of the best you can buy    ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Exceptional: a genuine class leader





## FINAL VERDICT

**Y**ou can get an awful lot of bike for £1,000 these days and any one of these would make a good weekend trail warrior, but there are some big differences between the four machines.

Scott market the Scale as a junior racer, saying it's designed for "world-class speed", but ultimately it doesn't quite convince in this role. Although the pedigree geometry shines through, the

long-and-low ride position doesn't mesh well with its basic components.

Then there's the Longitude and FS Team, which are two very different bikes. The basic spec and rigid fork of the Genesis will put some buyers off but it's a versatile machine that would happily do double duty as a hardcore commuter. The Boardman, on the other hand, is a good deal with a great spec,

though the tall gearing and high weight count against it.

Which just leaves the Norco Charger 7.1. Cheapest of this bunch and without the unique selling points of the other bikes on test, it's the blend of decent components and tidy handling that convinces – and the fact you'll have a couple of hundred quid left over from a £1,000 budget to buy accessories.

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**£2,500 downhill bikes**

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# THRASH METAL WHEELS

*Want trail-slayer wheels that'll add speed, grip and bombproof confidence to your riding? We've thrown 15 sets from £205 to £750 into the mosh pit*

Words Guy Kesteven Pics Mick Kirkman

## FREEHUB

The faster the freehub engages, the less lag you have getting the power down out of corners or off start lines (whether real or imaginary). Freehubs can be the least reliable part of a wheel though, and if they fail on a ride you're scootered.

## AXLES

The current all-rounder axle standards are 15x100mm front and 12x142mm rear, but the wheels you choose need to fit the bike you've got. That's where easily interchangeable axle fixtures become a futureproofing/upgrade advantage.

## HUBS

There are a surprising number of different designs for hubs, depending on weight or strength/stiffness priorities and spoke patterns/types. Bearing and sealing quality, servicing and adjustment potential, and complexity also vary widely between brands and designs.

## SPOKES

Spokes are basically thick, high tension wires that connect the hub to the rim. Most decent wheels use butted (varying thickness) steel spokes that hook (J bend) or thread straight through (straight pull) the hub, but Mavic and CrankBrothers use alloy spokes.

## RIMS

All the wheels here use alloy rather than carbon fibre rims to keep prices relatively affordable. Width, weight, strength, design details and features like tubeless capability vary between hoops. We've used 650b versions for clear comparison but mentioned other sizes where relevant.





WE BASE OUR SCORES ON VALUE FOR MONEY AND PERFORMANCE



**EXCEPTIONAL:**  
A genuine class leader



**VERY GOOD:** One of the best you can buy



**GOOD:** It'll do the job and do it well



**BELOW AVERAGE:**  
Flawed in some way



**POOR:** Simply put, don't bother!



## THE TESTER

### Guy Kesteven

Guy's a rim dinging, bearing grinding freehub killer. Add his northern test crew and our mag team down in Bristol into the equation and any wheel that survives our testing unscathed is a truly impressive bit of kit.

# What to look for

## Wheels that'll make you cock-a-hoop

**YOU NEED WHEELS** that fit the bike you have now, so be sure to check the sizes and axle options before you buy. If your current wheels have QR axles or older bolt-through standards such as 20mm front or 12x135mm rear, then buying wheels that can be upgraded if you switch your fork and/or frame makes sense. While all these wheels are available in the 650b size (also known as 27.5in), not all come in 29in and even fewer in 26in, so check the individual reviews for details.

Rim width is becoming a hot topic. Fatbikes show the grip advantages of really huge tyres, and extra-wide 650b+ wheels are set to explode on to the scene soon. Most manufacturers are moving towards wider (25mm+ internal width) rims because they fatten up narrower (2.1-2.2in) and support wider (2.3in+) tyres better for a more stable feel when cornering or running low pressures. Wider tyres tend to be stiffer for a given weight.

All components tread a fine line between low weight for responsive agility and enough strength to survive your style of riding, but wheels take it to the highest pitch. Because you're having to accelerate the rotating rim rather than a static weight, wheel mass impacts on performance more than grams anywhere else on your bike. That said, skinny spokes, flimsy hubs or flexy rims can really undermine riding confidence.

One way to increase strength without increasing weight is to use better quality metals and more



intricate construction techniques, such as Mavic's ISM rim machining or Spank's Oobah bulge. Carbon rims are becoming more affordable too, and the best deliver similar stiffness to alloy at a much lighter weight. They can't be bent back into shape like alloy if dented though, so a puncture halfway down a rocky section could mean a new wheel. Some carbon wheels are actually heavier than alloy equivalents and still fragile too, so don't assume carbon is always better.

Disappointingly, more expenditure doesn't necessarily mean a better metal wheel either. It might mean lighter, stiffer or both, but from our experience that doesn't always mean tougher. There are some robust yet responsive wheels worth paying a premium for, but we've had a lot more bearing and freehub failures on fancy wheels than affordable ones. We've also had more damaged rims on the exotic wheels, and the fact they often use rare-breed spokes makes spares sourcing harder and more expensive.

We've been stripping freehubs, snapping spokes, killing bearings and bending rims for years, so read on for our reliable, honest wheel reviews. »

## HOW WE TESTED THEM

**LAST YEAR SAW** a massive upheaval in the world of wheels as 650b bikes became the new must-have machines and wider rims became a real trend too. That meant many manufacturers took it as an opportunity to switch to new designs, but not all of them have been successful and some are already on their second or even third redesign.

Making sure we've taken all these wheels to the limit has kept us flat out, full gas all year everywhere from Morocco to the Alps, as well as more locally in Wales, the Dales and at other super-radical cheeky trails we can't tell you about.

We've concentrated on 650b wheels in the 1,600-2,000g range. That's because they offer the best strength/weight balance for most aggressive, pedal (rather than uplift) powered trail riders. We've also ridden a lot of lighter XC wheels, proper bomber DH wheels and 29er wheels of all shapes and sizes, and included references to those where relevant. You'll find full reviews of all the wheelsets we've tested in our Wrecked & Rated test section and at [www.bikeradar.com](http://www.bikeradar.com) too.



## JARGON BUSTER

> **Axles** Most trail bikes now use 15x100mm front and 12x142mm rear axles, though some still use 10x135mm QR rear axles.

> **Butted** Spokes (and frame tubes) that are thicker at the ends (double butted) or one end (single butted) than they are in the middle.

> **Cassette** The collection of different sized rear sprockets that the chain runs on.

> **End cap** End pieces that plug into the wheel bearings and can be swapped to handle different axle types.

> **Freehub** The splined barrel that carries the cassette and, internally, the pawls that let you freewheel.

> **J bend** Spoke with a hooked end.

> **Internal width** Distance between the inner edges of a rim.

> **Lag** The delay between when you start pedalling and actual drive engagement (known as 'pick-up'). Measured in degrees of freehub rotation. Less is better!

> **Nipple** Long threaded 'nut' that the spoke tightens into.

> **Pawls** Spring-loaded teeth in the freehub that engage with the toothed drive ring on the hub. When these go, you can't pedal.

> **Quick release (QR)** Old-style wheel securing system using a thin metal skewer with tightening cam lever held in place by slotted frame/fork dropouts.

> **Rim strip** Plastic, rubber or cloth tape used to cover spoke holes and/or create a sealed rim bed for a tubeless system.

> **Splines** Ribs on the freehub that secure the cassette.

> **Straight pull** Totally straight (rather than J bend) spoke.

> **Tubeless ready** Rim that has walls shaped for airtight security but may need a rim strip and sealant to complete the system.

> **UST** The official standard for tubeless wheels and tyres.

> **XD** Special freehub needed for SRAM 11-speed cassettes.





**WEIGHT:** 800+900=1,700g  
**WIDTH:** 25mm internal/ 29mm external  
**LAG:** 12°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in

## Spada Tananai

£679 VAM Performance [www.vamperformance.com](http://www.vamperformance.com)

**SPADA WHEELS ARE** hand-built in Italy. The skinny spokes on our samples were impressively tight and true, with no twanging on the first ride or wobble creeping in during testing. While freehub pick-up is average they're light enough to feel responsive and they come in all wheel sizes and axle standards. Tubeless tyres inflate with ease on the broad, shallow rims once you add valves, and the rims hold on to

the tyres even at lower pressures. They also fatten up 2.2in rubber noticeably and give a solid base to larger rubber. There's a noticeable amount of sideways flex in the wheels though, which leaves them prone to scrubbing rather than sticking when pushed hard through corners. We also dinged the rear rim badly on a minor rock impact.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆☆



**WEIGHT:** 770+890=1,660g  
**WIDTH:** 22/27mm  
**LAG:** 15°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in

## American Classic All Mountain

£589.99 Today's Cyclist [www.todayscyclist.co.uk](http://www.todayscyclist.co.uk)

**THESE WHEELS ARE** typically light and agile, but more trail than all-mountain in the heavy-duty handling stakes. American Classic were one of the first brands to push wider wheels with their Wide Lightnings. The AMs are a lot narrower across the inner faces for a more conventional tyre shape and volume. They're pre-taped and easy-sealing red anodised valves are included for simple tubeless inflation. From experience, they hang

on to pressure stubbornly even when ripped sideways or rimmed hard and we didn't manage to dent this set. While pick-up is OK, not outstanding, they feel light and lovely on the bike. The steel-reinforced freehub helps reduce torque damage and they come in most current wheel and axle standards, but they're flexy enough to feel vague when ridden hard.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆☆



**WEIGHT:** 910+970=1,880g  
**WIDTH:** 24/30mm  
**LAG:** 12°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b

## DMR Zone

£349.98 Upgrade Bikes [www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk)

**BRED IN THE** brutal world of dirt jumping, DMR have a reputation for serious strength. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case with our first sample of their new Zone wheels. The rim is an obvious tyre fattener, with a 24mm inside span, and it comes pre-fitted with tubeless tape. Valves cost extra though, and while we had no problems with sealing, the rim is slightly smaller in diameter than most on test, which meant some

tyres were a baggy fit. We also managed to put a wall-flattening dent into the rear rim and knock the wheel out of alignment without even registering a serious impact. We're testing a second wheel now and hopefully that'll do the otherwise well priced, reliable, lightweight-hubbed wheel build justice, but it's not a great start for the Zone.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆☆



**WEIGHT:** 840+980=1,820g  
**WIDTH:** 22/26mm  
**LAG:** 17°  
**SIZES:** 650b, 29in

## CrankBrothers Iodine 3

£699.99 Extra (UK) [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)

**CRANKBROTHERS' SUPER-STIFF** wheels finally get the hub longevity to match their radical looks. The unique design uses longitudinal rim tabs to hold sideways barrels that the straight-pull half-spokes thread into in almost parallel pairs. The other half of each spoke is effectively an extra-long alloy nipple that inserts straight into a tab on the rim. The result is a massively stiff structure that steers like it's on rails. They can

take a beating on rocky trails and they seal tubelessly without stress. After a full winter with our most powerful hub-eating tester we're happy to say the bearings and freehub are now as tough as the wheel build. But the 22mm inner width means really fat tyres can feel unstable, pick-up is lazy and weight is quite high for their price and width.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆☆



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Avid Elixir 7 Trail | Avid Elixir 9 Trail



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## Easton Vice XLT

£669.98 Silverfish [www.silverfish-uk.com](http://www.silverfish-uk.com)

**THE VICE XLTS** are the first properly reliable wheels from Easton's new generation, but they're slow to pick up and pricey too. Ironically the X4 hubs that make the Vice XLTs a bit heavier and cheaper than the Havens have proven a lot more reliable than previous Easton hubs, with both our sample sets remaining trouble free after almost a year of hammering. The tubeless rim seals easily too and while it can dent

slightly if battered through boulders it's impressively resilient and tough overall. The 21mm inner width doesn't do tyres any fattening favours or support larger rubber well. The 24-spoke build is slightly soft when cornering hard or under power, and there's often noticeable freehub lag before drive kicks in. Axle conversion is possible but awkward.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆



**WEIGHT:** 820+940=1,760g  
**WIDTH:** 21/26mm  
**LAG:** 18°  
**SIZES:** 650b

## SRAM RAIL 50

£445 Fisher Outdoor Leisure [www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk)

**THE RAILS ARE** SRAM's heaviest duty wheels, with designed-in durability. UST certification means an instant pop-up tubeless fit, but the rim isn't fat tyre friendly, with an internal width of just 22mm (not the claimed 23mm). The butted Taper Core rim section has proven impressively tough on long-term sets and the asymmetric design means the same length spokes are used all round. Despite only 24 spokes, extra

wide spacing means the RAILS are predictably accurate but with a deliberate element of inline compression damping. The result is a smooth, planted feel on the trail. Freehub and bearing longevity is good across all SRAM wheels and the RAILS come in every size. Slow pick-up and relatively high weight for the price are the downsides.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆



**WEIGHT:** 850+960=1,810g  
**WIDTH:** 22/27mm  
**LAG:** 18°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in

## Race Face Turbine

£429 Silverfish [www.silverfish-uk.com](http://www.silverfish-uk.com)

**RACE FACE LAUNCHED** the Turbine wheels last year and they've proved decent all-rounders. While there are only 28 straight pull, bladed spokes in each wheel, they keep the Turbines on target with predictable accuracy. They transmit power well too. Weight is average for their relatively skinny width though and the hubs take a while to catch on out of corners. The 21mm internal dimensions don't obviously change

tyre profile and fat 2.3-2.4in rubber can feel unstable. The tubeless kit costs extra but they seal easily. Mechanical durability has been good in several sets we've hammered hard over the past year and spokes are symmetrical for easy spares sorting. Quick-release and 10x135mm rear axle spacers are included, but the front is 15mm only.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆



**WEIGHT:** 860+910=1,770g  
**WIDTH:** 21/25mm  
**LAG:** 18°  
**SIZES:** 650b, 29in

## Raleigh Pro Build Trail Alex/Chosen

£205 Raleigh [www.raleigh.co.uk](http://www.raleigh.co.uk)

**RALEIGH'S ALL-MOUNTAIN** wheelset is very affordable but needs tweaking before being ridden hard. With a generously broad 25mm internal well and tubeless tape already installed (valves are extra), the Alex Volar rims get these wheels off to a great start. They seal easily, fatten up thinner rubber like a scared cat and give solid support to big tyres. The Chosen hubs use a fast engaging freehub design to lock in

drive almost immediately, which offsets the high weight when accelerating. The 32 double-butt spokes with brass nipples spread the load well and are easy to tighten. Just as well, because our wheels were built very soft and unbalanced, felt soggy and vague, and were deteriorating rapidly until we took a spoke key to them and tightened them into shape.

**MBUK** ★★☆☆



**WEIGHT:** 910+1,060=1,970g  
**WIDTH:** 25/30mm  
**LAG:** 6°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in



# Billys

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**WEIGHT:** 820+910=1,730g  
**WIDTH:** 24/28mm  
**LAG:** 10°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in

## DT Swiss EX1501 SPLINE ONE

£749.99 Hotlines [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**DT SWISS ARE** back on form with their pricey but tight and responsive EX SPLINE wheels. They suffered a rough reliability patch with their freehubs a few seasons back so we've been making sure the new wheels stand up by beasting every set in the most brutal torque tests we can. The broad and deep rim gives reassuring, almost carbon-like stiffness on the trail even under maximum rock-dodging twist or

belly-scraping berm loads too. Tubeless tape and valves are included, and the rims seal easily, adding obvious girth to whatever rubber you run. QR hub adaptors are included too. The 28 straight-pull DT Comp spokes lock into rounded hub tabs for impressive drive transmission. High performance equals a hefty price tag though.

**MBUK** ★★★★★



**WEIGHT:** 840+920=1,760g  
**WIDTH:** 25/29.5mm  
**LAG:** 12°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in

## Spank Oozy Trail295 Bead Bite

£449.99 Hotlines [www.hotlines-uk.com](http://www.hotlines-uk.com)

**SPANK'S OOZY WHEELS** were already favourites and the Trail295 version adds extra rim width and tubeless security. The 25mm internal width blows up medium tyres much fatter and squarer, and gives a great base for ripping big 2.4in rubber. Valves and tape cost extra and the domed 'Oohbah' rim can be a fight to get tyres on to, but the Bead Bite ribs mean good low-pressure security. Triple-butt spokes and the rim

profile keep them seriously stiff and they're light enough to noticeably pep up your bike. The Japanese bearings and freehub are bombproof and axle versatility is good. Choose Spank's Spike wheels for DH duty, because while our current samples are fine, we killed both rims on our first set of Trail295s going fast and furious in rocky Finale Figure.

**MBUK** ★★★★★



**WEIGHT:** 760+930=1,690g  
**WIDTH:** 23/28.5mm  
**LAG:** 12°  
**SIZES:** 650b, 29in

## Reynolds R27.5 AM

£499.99 Upgrade Bikes [www.upgradebikes.co.uk](http://www.upgradebikes.co.uk)

**REYNOLDS' AM WHEELS** are tough yet responsive all-rounders that'll boost the performance of any trail/enduro bike. Tape and valves are included, and tyres blow up tubeless with ease. The 23mm internal width means a slightly plumper and better supported feel for tyres up to 2.4in at lower pressures, and we've never worried about what rubber we've thrown on our long-term set. After an early bearing failure they've been

totally trouble-free post service too, even taking the legendary evil Strathpuffer 24-hour winter race in their stride. They're light enough to pep up performance in an XC context but tight and tough enough to survive black run hammering even on a hardtail. Axle adaptors are included and the price is reasonable for the impressive performance.

**MBUK** ★★★★★



**WEIGHT:** 810+980=1,790g  
**WIDTH:** 23/28.5mm  
**LAG:** 5°  
**SIZES:** 650b, 29in

## Novatec Diablo Enduro

£489 Extra (UK) [www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)

**THE DIABLOS WERE** some of the first wide 650b wheels available and they're still some of the best. Our two-year-old, brutally abused Diablos are still going strong with just a front bearing replacement and a couple of fresh spokes after crashes. The broad rim has proved particularly indestructible and, while valves and sealing strips cost extra, it works great set up tubeless. The 32 spokes keep the wheels solidly stiff under

maximum pedalling and cornering loads, and the ultra-fast reacting freehub has never missed a beat. This makes them feel a lot more responsive than their middling weight would suggest. You get spare spokes and every imaginable axle conversion included with the wheels, and given their seriously impressive longevity they're a fair price.

**MBUK** ★★★★★



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# WINNERS

## Tester says...

“ We’ve tested a ton of wheels this year, but there aren’t many we’d recommend. Superstar and Hope show you don’t need to pay a fortune for rock solid wheels. If you can afford them, Mavic’s combo is like riding Blu Tack trails with noise cancelling headphones. ”



**WEIGHT:** 980+1120=2,100g  
**WIDTH:** 25/30mm  
**LAG:** 5°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in

**MBUK**  
**WINNER**

## Superstar Tech 4 DS25

£194.99 Superstar Components [www.superstarcomponents.com](http://www.superstarcomponents.com)

**IF YOU’VE BEEN** reading our Team Bikes pages you’ll have seen these lime green wheels on Guy’s GT Force for a while. That’s because they’re solid performers at an unbelievable price, and we’ve had the same feedback on Superstar’s range of wheels from everyone who’s used them. By selling direct, Superstar keep extra costs to a minimum and really do pass the savings on to you. Their website also lets you create your ideal wheel from a wide range of rims, hubs, spokes, axle fittings, freehubs (standard, XD or steel bodied) and colours (for £10 extra).

What’s really impressive about Superstar is that they’re generally well ahead of the curve of most major manufacturers, as these 25mm internal width rims prove. Their

carbon-rimmed wheels are cheaper than most premium alloy sets and there’s a whole range of super-wide hoops in the pipeline. Back to the Tech 4 DS25s, tubeless kits are £18 extra but they seal really easily once installed, and we’ve beaten the crap out of these rims and other sets without a single issue. The hand-built UK quality is excellent too, keeping them tight and feedback-rich on the trail, and the SKF bearings are top quality. In case your luck runs out, Superstar will re-true them for free for life and replace crash-mangled components at a discount. That leaves high weight as the only grumble but there are lighter options at equally crazy value prices.

**MBUK** ★★★★★



**WEIGHT:** 920+1,070=1,990g  
**WIDTH:** 23/28.5mm  
**LAG:** 7.5°  
**SIZES:** 26in, 650b, 29in

**MBUK**  
**VALUE**

## Hope Tech Enduro Pro 2 EVO

£385 Hope Technology [www.hopetech.com](http://www.hopetech.com)

**HOPE HAVE BEEN** building their outstandingly durable, user friendly, UK-built hubs into complete wheels for a while. Their own-design rims were introduced last year and now their hand-building is tight enough to make these a top option. Hope’s rims are tubeless ready (tape and valves extra) and with a 23mm internal width they add a bit of extra support and size to tyres. The several sets we’ve used have proved

impressively tough and they’re more responsive than you’d expect for the weight. Hope’s latest Pro 2 EVO hubs are as reliable and easy to service as ever but quieter, with a quick pick-up, and they come in every axle species and size you could want. These tough all-rounder wheels deliver the stiffness and consistent control the premium individual parts deserve.

**MBUK** ★★★★★



**WEIGHT:** 850+970=1,820g  
**WIDTH:** 23/27mm  
**LAG:** 7.5°  
**SIZES:** 650b

**MBUK**  
**MOST WANTED**

## Mavic Crossmax XL Pro LTD WTS

£675 Mavic [www.mavic.co.uk](http://www.mavic.co.uk)

**MAVIC’S NEW LIMITED** edition wheel and tyre combo boosts toughness and control compared to their existing sets. The Crossmax XL wheelset isn’t new, with the 23mm inner width rear wheel adding more volume and stability compared to the 21mm Crossmax Enduro. With four more fat alloy spokes at the back than the Enduro it’s also heavier. Stiffness and strength are increased from already excellent levels, creating a rock

solid trail feel. Bearing and fast-reacting freehub longevity are outstanding, and the UST rims are the benchmark for tubeless set-up. Tyre performance is equally impressive, with a superbly damped and traction-rich Crossmax Charge XL up front and a new dual compound, better cornering, shock shrugging, dual ply XL version of the Crossmax Quest at the rear.

**MBUK** ★★★★★

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THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE & PLACES TO  
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P149 **HOW TO...**

## USE YOUR ACTION CAMERA LIKE A PRO

The lowdown on buying and using your camera



P154 **GRIMETIME**

Step-by-step guide to get your fork and shock performing at their best



P156 **ASK MBUK**

Your questions, our answers, all of your mechanical problems solved



P166 **WRECKING CREW**

## MABIE FOREST, SCOTLAND

We explore the fantastic hidden 'locals' singletrack alongside the waymarked trails



P158 **THE BIG RIDE**

Walna Scar in the Lake District offers epic scenery and storming descents

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All our route maps are put together by route guru **Max Darkins**. Max loves travelling the country in search of the best trails and is also the man behind **[www.roughrideguide.co.uk](http://www.roughrideguide.co.uk)**





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**Words** Jake Ireland **Pics** Ben Winder

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[uk.contour.com](http://uk.contour.com)

#### So Good...

The ROAM3 wins in the simplicity stakes. Simply push the slider forward to record, then backwards to stop. The lens rotates so you can make sure your footage is upright no matter how you mount the camera, and the audio quality is good too, though it does pick up a fair bit of wind noise. There are seven photo settings and a single video setting (1,080p Full HD at 30 frames per second). Using Contour's PC/Mac software, you can pick two of these modes to toggle between using a simple switch behind the camera's back door. Battery life is really good, averaging around three hours, due to the lack of screen and simple operation.

#### No Good...

The footage is noticeably more grainy than that captured by the GoPro and Garmin, and the lack of a screen means it can take time to get the ROAM3 aimed correctly. It does have laser pointers but these only work well over a very short range and can be hard to see in sunlight.

MBUK ★★☆☆☆

£149.99

### Garmin VIRB

[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)

#### So Good...

The budget model in the Garmin line-up is easy to operate, with a 4.1in colour screen and an intuitive menu system navigated using simple buttons on the side of the camera. Recording is started and stopped with a similar slider to the Contour, with six resolution and frame rate options to choose from, including 1,080p/30fps, 720p/60fps and 480p/120fps. Garmin have wisely included a GoPro mount adaptor – a big improvement over their clunky proprietary system. The battery lasts almost twice as long as the GoPro's, at just under three hours, but the Garmin weighs nearly twice as much.

#### No Good...

The VIRB's screen is great for getting the camera aimed but its low resolution means that playback, although possible, is somewhat pointless. The settings are limited, though they do give you the options you're likely to want to use. It's annoying that you have to take the camera apart and remove the battery to get to the memory card.

MBUK ★★☆☆☆

£329.99

### GoPro HERO4 Silver

[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)



#### So Good...

The big plus point with the HERO4 Silver is the screen on the back of the camera, which makes positioning an absolute breeze, as well as replacing the less-than-intuitive menu system used on previous GoPros with simple touchscreen controls. Settings for almost every eventuality mean you can capture professional looking footage with vivid colours and sharp images even in low light. GoPro's mounts offer more possibilities than any other system and are well built too. Even the battery life is respectable – 1.5 hours with the screen on, and longer without.

#### No Good...

The HERO4 Silver is the only HERO model with a screen built in, and it's big bucks compared to the other two cams here (though the GoPro range does start with the £109.99 HERO). The audio quality when it's in the waterproof case isn't great, but who films on soaking wet days anyway?

MBUK ★★★★★



# WHAT SETTINGS?

You can make your footage look a lot better by adjusting the settings on the camera to suit the conditions or type of shot you're after. Sometimes this can be done on the camera itself but more basic models often have to be plugged into a computer. Here's what the most common settings do...



## Resolution and aspect ratio

The **resolution** is the width and height of the video footage you're filming, in pixels. All three cameras here are capable of shooting in Full HD resolution – 1,920x1,080p. The higher the resolution, the higher the image quality and the larger the file size of the video. The **aspect ratio** is the ratio of the width to the height – in this case 16:9, which is the normal widescreen format, as opposed to 4:3, which is the old-style, squarer format.



## Frame rate

**Frame rate**, measured in frames per second (fps), refers to how many still images make up a second of video footage. A higher number of frames is better for faster moving subjects, although the more frames per second, the less light the camera will be able to pick up. We usually film at 60fps, even though that often means a compromise when it comes to resolution. If it's a really dull day we sometimes switch to 30fps mode.



## Field of view

Some cameras have a **field of view** (FOV) option, which alters the lens angle and the amount of fisheye effect. The wider the field of view, the more the image has to be distorted to fit everything in.



## Orientation

Action cams sometimes have to be mounted upside down to get the best footage – for example, if you use a chest mount. Some have rotating lenses while others have an option on the camera itself to flip the footage. This saves you having to make the change using editing software, which can slow your computer down.



## Apps

Many action cams now come with wi-fi or Bluetooth based **smartphone apps** that help you with targeting and let you watch your footage too. We've found ourselves using the GoPro app regularly, using our phones to transfer and play back videos – and as remote controls to shoot photos for Instagram!



# BEST FILMING SPOT?

There are unlimited camera mounting possibilities, but here are some surefire favourites that'll ensure you get some rad footage in the bag.



## Bike Handlebar

Bar mounts allow an uninterrupted view of the trail ahead, with no bits of your bike or body jutting into view. Rough trails can result in shaky footage though, and the camera follows where your bar – rather than your bike – is pointing the whole time.



## Bike Seatpost/under saddle

Mounting the camera under your saddle gives you an unusual perspective, letting you see how well your rear wheel is tracking and/or how much faster you are than the rider behind. You can use a seatpost mount like we have here or a dedicated under-saddle mount. Not one for muddy weather!



## Bike Frame

Sticky-backed frame mounts open up hundreds of camera angle possibilities, whether you want to see how well your fork is using its travel, look straight down the trail or even point the camera up into the sky for a more artistic perspective on things.



## Off bike Trailside

Try placing the camera by the side of the trail to get some cool footage from a different angle. Filming from the outside of a berm always looks rad! Alternatively, get your mate to hold the camera and film you as you ride past, panning to follow the action.



## Off bike Vantage point

Sticking the camera somewhere high up will give you another angle that'll help your edit stand out in a sea of helmet cam footage. Why not use a chest or bar mount to fix it to a tree, looking down at the trail? If your camera has an app you can use it to check the angle.



## Body Helmet

The helmet is a classic mounting location, but it's easy to get things wrong and end up with a load of lid in the shot rather than the trail you're trying to film. Always check the angle and that the mounts are secure and not going to shake while you're riding!





## WHAT NOW?

Once you've got some decent footage in the bag, it's time to edit it down into a clip that people will actually want to watch.



### Body Chest

We like chest mounts because they give a great view of what's going on at the handlebar as well as on the trail ahead. They're risky when it comes to crashes though, as our Dep Art Ed Matt knows all too well – he's nursing some broken ribs after an over-the-bars while wearing his.



### Body Helmet boom

Helmet booms are relatively inexpensive (The GoPole Arm seen here is £17.99 from [www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)) and provide a unique viewpoint. This isn't the mounting position to use if you want to show a lot of the trail, but for an unusual perspective, they're well worth the cash.



Editing your footage can be the hardest part of the filming process – but sometimes a raw upload straight from the camera is all you need!

If you're using a GoPro, the **GoPro Studio** software lets you import and edit your videos all in one place, and we've found it reliable as well as easy to use. If you're on a Mac, **iMovie** is a no-brainer – it's easy to use and works seamlessly. The iOS version is now one of our favourites too, cutting out the need for an actual computer and letting you edit footage on your phone or iPad instead. If you're on a PC, **Windows Movie Maker** is usually pre-installed or you can download it for free, and it's fine for the basics.

It's always best to edit your videos to be as short as possible. People don't have very long attention spans, especially when it comes to online videos – YouTube say the average viewing time is just two minutes. Keep things short and sweet, and mix things up to keep viewers interested.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

Things don't always go to plan, so here are the answers to some common questions from budding action cammers.

### Why is my footage shaky/blurry?

The most common cause of dodgy footage is a mount that isn't totally secure, with even the smallest amount of wobble translating into blurry and violently shaky video. Check the mount(s) you're using for any instability before changing anything else. If the mount isn't to blame, try increasing the frame rate at which you're filming (bearing in

mind that the higher the frame rate, the darker the footage will look) – 60fps is our go-to setting for most conditions.

### Why does my footage look jumpy when I play it back on my computer?

This issue may be caused by the computer struggling to deal with the large video file rather than any problems with the camera or footage. First off, close down any other

programs that are running so that the playback software can make the most of the computer's capability. Sometimes a restart can help too! If you're still having problems, try reducing the video resolution to 720p – we film in 720p most of the time anyway because it creates smaller files that play more easily but still look good on most phones and computer screens.

### Why is my footage dim and badly lit?

Other than the obvious – you're filming on a dim, badly lit day – chances are you're filming at too high a frame rate and this is preventing enough light from getting into the camera. If it's a really dingy day we sometimes use the 30fps setting to compensate.





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## DIFFICULTY

## BASIC SUSPENSION SET-UP TIPS

TIME 25 mins

COST £Free

Follow this step-by-step guide to get your fork and shock performing at their best

### PREPARATION



**01** Put on your riding gear and pack (if you normally use one) – the weight will affect how your suspension behaves. Ensure the fork stanchions and shock shaft are clean. Turn any compression dials/climb switches to their most open position ('descend' mode/open padlock symbol). If your fork doesn't have a sag indicator O-ring, wrap a ziptie loosely around one stanchion.

### FORK SAG



**02** Without sag, the suspension can't extend into holes as you ride. Cycle the fork through its travel, then move the O-ring/ziptie to the bottom of the stanchion. On level ground, using a wall or friend for balance, assume the 'attack' position (pedals level, knees bent slightly, elbows forward). Carefully dismount from the bike without compressing the fork any further.

### SHOCK SAG



**06** To measure the sag on an air shock, sit on the bike and use your weight to cycle the shock through its travel. Dismount and lower the saddle. Slide the sag indicator O-ring along the shock shaft until it sits next to the seal. Sit on the bike, putting all your weight on the saddle but avoiding bouncing the suspension. The shock should compress a little. Dismount carefully.

### SHOCK SAG



**07** If there are sag markings on the shock shaft, read off the sag percentage indicated by the bottom of the O-ring. If not, use a tape measure to determine the distance from the O-ring to the seal. Divide this measurement by the shock stroke (this is often written on the shaft – if not, see step 8), then multiply by 100 to calculate the sag percentage.

### SHOCK SAG



**08** To measure the shock stroke, attach a shock pump to the Schrader valve on the shock. Note the pressure, then press the pump's bleed button to release all of the air. Remove the pump, then sit on the bike to bottom out the shock. Dismount, reinflate the shock to its original pressure and remove the pump. The distance from O-ring to seal is the shock stroke.

### REBOUND DAMPING



**12** If the fork/shock extends past its sag point and then oscillates back down below it, slow the rebound down by turning the rebound dial clockwise. If the fork/shock doesn't extend past its sag point, speed up the rebound by turning the rebound dial anticlockwise. Repeat step 12 until the suspension only rebounds above the sag point once. This gives a good base setting.

### REBOUND DAMPING



**13** To fine tune the rebound damping, find a rough section of trail and ride it repeatedly while experimenting with different settings. If the rebound is too slow, the suspension will 'pack down' and become harsher over the later hits. Turn the rebound dial one click anticlockwise to speed it up. Repeat until the suspension feels consistently controlled over the bumps.

### REBOUND DAMPING



**14** If the rebound is too fast, the fork will feel jarring and uncontrolled. The rear suspension will feel bouncy, with a bucking sensation on jumps. Turn the rebound dial one click clockwise to slow it down. Repeat until the suspension feels consistently controlled. The rebound speed of fork and shock should be similar, but ideally slightly faster on the front.



Visit our website at  
[www.muc-off.com](http://www.muc-off.com)



1 2 3

## Tools for the job Essential kit

- 1 Shock pump
- 2 Tape measure
- 3 Thin ziptie (if fork doesn't have sag indicator O-ring)



### FORK SAG



**03** If there are sag percentages marked on the fork stanchion, read off the sag percentage indicated by the bottom of the O-ring. If not, use a tape measure to determine the distance from the fork seal to the bottom of the O-ring. Divide this measurement by the travel of the fork and then multiply by 100 to calculate the sag percentage.

### FORK SAG



**04** See Workshop Wisdom below for advice on how much sag to run. To alter the sag in an air fork, attach a shock pump to the Schrader valve at the top of the air spring, screwing the chuck clockwise on to the valve until it won't go on any further. To reduce the sag, add more air. To increase the sag, use the pump's bleed button to remove some air.

### FORK SAG



**05** Remove the shock pump, then measure the sag again, as in steps 2 and 3. Repeat steps 2 to 4 until the sag is at your desired level. Reinstall the valve cap. Remove the ziptie (if fitted). To alter the sag on a coil fork, use the preload adjuster (if there is one). If you still can't achieve the required sag, you'll need to swap to a lighter or heavier spring.

### SHOCK SAG



**09** See Workshop Wisdom below for advice on how much sag to run. To alter the sag in an air shock, attach a shock pump. To reduce the sag, add more air with the pump. To increase the sag, use the pump's bleed button to remove some air. Remove the shock pump, then measure the sag again, as in steps 6 and 7. Repeat until the sag is at your desired level.

### SHOCK SAG



**10** To measure the sag on a coil shock, first use a tape measure to determine its eye-to-eye length. Next, sit your full weight on the saddle and get a friend to measure the new eye-to-eye length. The difference between the two is the sag. The sag percentage can be calculated as in step 7 using the shock stroke. To alter the sag, you'll need to swap to a lighter or heavier spring.

### REBOUND DAMPING



**11** Now you need to determine how fast the suspension rebounds after impacts. Push down on the fork without bending your knees to compress the suspension. As it rebounds, keep your body rigid so the fork can move naturally. It should extend past its sag point and then return to it without oscillating. Repeat on the rear.

### COMPRESSION DAMPING



**15** Many forks and shocks have low-speed compression adjusters: these can include Fox's CTD lever, RockShox's three-position dial, as well as more precise indexed dials. Some offer high-speed compression adjustment too. The 'high' and 'low' speeds relate to the speed at which the fork or shock compresses upon impact, not the speed at which you're travelling.

### COMPRESSION DAMPING



**16** Adding more low-speed compression damping will reduce diving and wallowing when braking, cornering or pedalling. Adding more high-speed damping will help to keep the bike controlled when slamming through roots or braking bumps. Getting the right balance takes patience. Turn the dial/lever(s) clockwise (towards the '+' symbol) to increase the damping.

## WORKSHOP WISDOM

As a basic rule of thumb, start with 20 per cent sag at each end for XC, 25 per cent for trail riding and 30 per cent for DH. These are decent base settings but try experimenting with different set-ups.

With the sag set, stand centrally over the bike and push down as hard as possible. You should be using 80 to 90 per cent of the travel. If not,

don't add or remove air – this will affect the sag. Instead you need to adjust the spring curve to make it more progressive (harder to bottom out) or linear (easier to achieve full travel). On air forks and shocks this can often be done using volume spacers – consult the manufacturer's guidelines for details.





# MBUK

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**Q** After selling my downhill bike I'm looking to buy an enduro bike. I was sold on the Canyon Strive CF 9.0 Race, but a Specialized Stumpjumper FSR Expert Carbon EVO 29 caught my eye at a local bike shop. The 2014 model is still available within my price range. Which would you buy?

**Addy Roberts, via email**

**A** Rob had the Stumpy as his long-term bike last year and has the Strive CF 9.0 this year so he's pretty well placed to answer your question! Here's what he says: "The Stumpy is a great bike, especially when it comes to flat-out speed. You'll need to tweak the shock to make the back end more progressive though, and if you like to ride hard in steep and technical terrain it'll



Our Tech Ed in Chief rates his Canyon Strive CF 9.0

be worth investing in some stiffer wheels. It's definitely more of an all-round trail bike than an out and out enduro machine.

"As for the Strive, it's felt absolutely brilliant so far and I haven't changed anything, other than adding a couple of volume spacer bands to the rear shock. It's properly planted and stable on fast, technical descents, and thanks to the Shapeshifter system, climbs better than you'd expect of a 160mm (6.3in) travel bike."



Rental lock-ons come in a Kevlar compound that wears well

**Q** I'm struggling to find decent grips. I seem to be getting through a set a month! Do you have any suggestions?  
**Gus McDonald, via email**

**A** Wow, you must ride a lot! Rental lock-on grips are available in a Kevlar compound that should last you some time, without any compromise when it comes to the level of grip or comfort. They'll set you back £24.99. Alternatively, if you're not keen on the yellowish colour, there are the Hope lock-ons, with their discreet integrated collars and thin shape. A couple of the guys have been using these for a year now and they're still going strong. They also cost £25.

**Q** I've always wanted an Orange Crush but have seen some great reviews of the Whyte 905. I can't pick a winner. What's your advice?  
**Nick Thompson, Southampton**

**A** This is a tricky one. Both bikes have relatively slack head angles, slammed bottom brackets and RockShox Revelation forks. The Whyte has a slightly longer effective top tube though, making for a roomier cockpit – handy if you're on the tall side. The 905 also has shorter chainstays, which will help it feel lively in the turns. While the Crush has a slightly shorter effective top tube, its wheelbase is longer, which will help with stability when the going gets tough. Both bikes have decent specs too, so we'd say the only way to choose is to attend a demo day and try them for yourself.



## QUICK FIX MOUNTAIN BIKE TIPS

### How to use a digital tyre pressure gauge



**01** For a precise reading, first switch on the pressure gauge, then remove the valve cap from the valve. If it's a Presta (non car-type) valve, carefully unscrew the valve head, turning it anticlockwise.



**02** Carefully but quickly push the pressure gauge on to the valve, depressing the valve enough for some air to be released. As soon as you feel the pressure gauge bottom-out on the valve, remove it.



**03** Check the pressure gauge's display to see what the tyre pressure is. Adjust accordingly with a pump. If it's a Presta valve, screw in the valve head, turning it clockwise, before replacing the valve cap.



## CONTACT US:

Write to: Ask MBUK, Tower House, Fairfax St, Bristol BS1 3BN  
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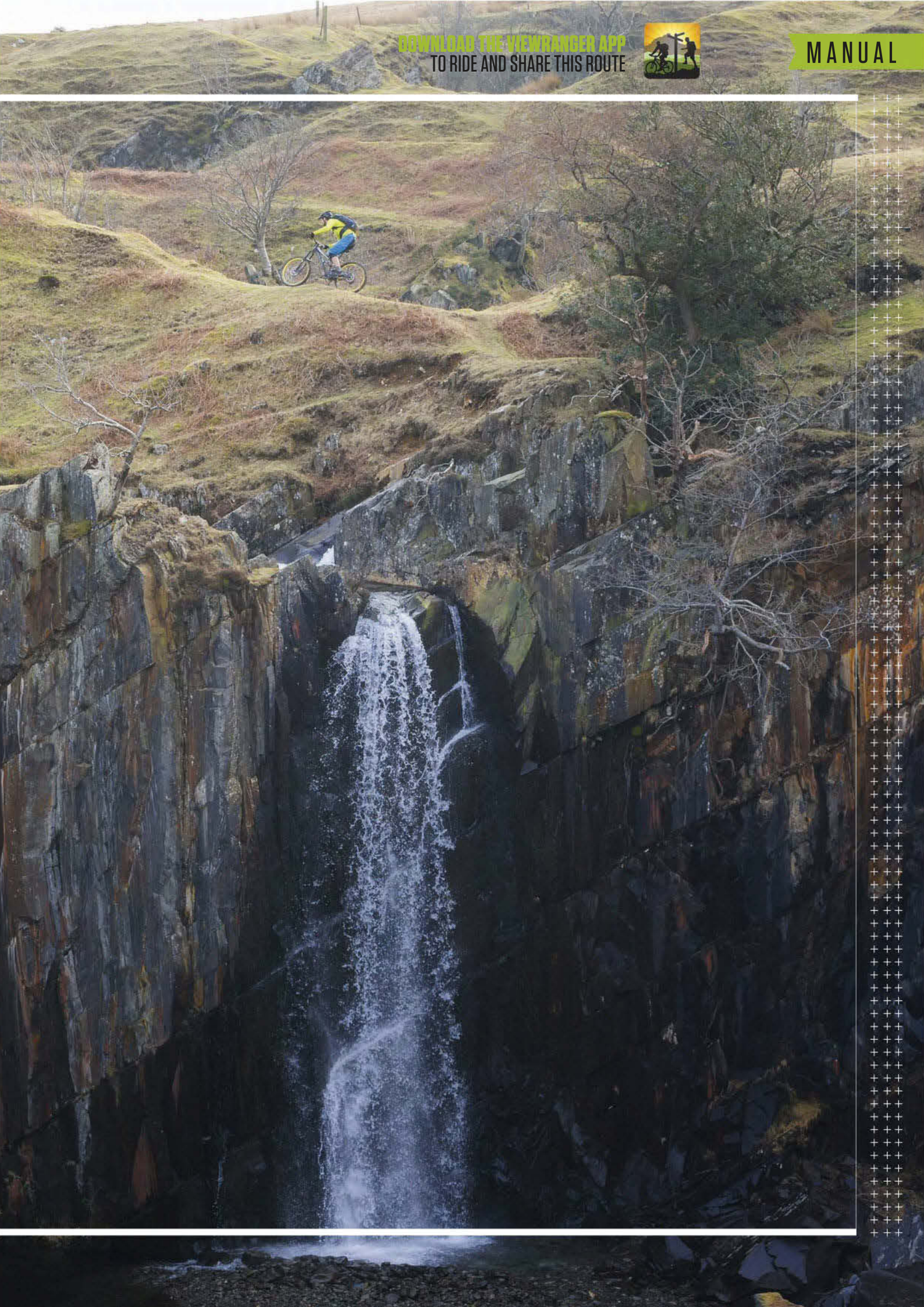
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Spring is probably the best time of year to visit the Lake District. The rocky trails don't get badly damaged over winter and, with 16 million visitors a year, it's good to go as soon as you get a clear day, before the crowds start arriving.

### Brekkie then banter

Russell and I wake to a clear blue sky and are eager to crack on, but we can't get breakfast before 9am and there's no way I'm going up a mountain until I've had my belly filled.

Some staff from the excellent Bike Treks shop in Ambleside – James Bell, Sam Armitage and John O'Connor – have taken the day off to join us, as has local MTB guide and instructor Ewen Turner, from Trailhum.com. We eventually meet the others in Torver, for the ritual banter, bike inspections and deliberation over what to wear.

The ride starts with a gentle spin along the main road but we soon bear off up an unnaturally steep looking road, and quickly realise that we've underestimated the warm

### THE LOWDOWN

THE LAKE DISTRICT



The Lake District National Park is a mountainous region in the north-west of England, and is home to some of the best technical MTBing in the country. [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk)

weather. At Broughton Moor we peel off the tarmac – as well as some layers – and join a lovely bit of singletrack through the trees that's a wicked old-school mix of off-camber mud, roots and rocks.

We emerge at the far side of the woods, where there's a forest track that climbs gradually along the edge. The last 100m is a footpath – you could carry your bike along »



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## THE TRAIL HAS BEEN SANITISED BUT IT'S STILL A FUN, LOOSE, ROCKY DESCENT WITH ZIG-ZAG TURNS AND BERMS

this section or, as we've shown on the map, ride up and back down the bridleway.

You should definitely ride the bridleway down the valley though. The top is wide and open, and we pick our way down through the ruts and up over rocks until the trail goes through a wall and alongside a stream. It becomes narrower and follows a firm slither cut into the hillside, which gives the feeling of climbing, but it's actually a gradual descent and we're flying along at speed.

Bearing right by the buildings at the bottom, we climb a steep grassy track that heads out on to the moors. The Long Mire trail thankfully isn't living up to its name and is dry enough to ride up, but if it's wet it's probably worth taking the long way around via Raven's Crag.

Today, the bleached grass of the moors is reflecting the warm rays of the sun and we feel obliged to sit at the top, taking in the views and tranquillity of the location

before the frantic descent down into Seathwaite. As if there wasn't enough to concentrate on during this rocky downhill, a huge roar echoes around us and we see a scarily low Hercules plane lumbering down the valley. It looks like it has no right to stay in the air but it ambles on, wingtips almost cutting lines into the hillsides.

At the bottom, the Newfield Inn at Seathwaite is a welcome sight, especially for James, who's managed to rattle his pivot bolts loose. He makes use of the landlord's toolbox while the rest of us make use of the bar. Tempting as it is to order one of their superb pub meals, we resist, knowing the huge climb up Walna Scar is next.

### Feel the burn

We warm our legs back up with a short spin along the tarmac, before the off-road onslaught of Walna Scar. The first zoom is a steep, loose, rocky climb that I annoyingly stutter and dab on just before the end, »

## WHAT IS VIEWRANGER?



ViewRanger is an app that lets outdoor enthusiasts discover, plan, navigate and share their adventures on smartphones, on tablets and online. With offline mapping (including Ordnance Survey maps), turn-by-turn navigation and bike computer functions like ride time, ride distance and current, average and maximum speed, it'll turn your phone into a fully fledged GPS unit.

You can also use it to plan or download routes, access guidebook-style information, broadcast your location and track your friends. It has a social platform too, where you can store and share their adventures.

ViewRanger is used by more than 400 official bodies, including search-and-rescue teams in the UK and overseas.



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**TESTING TERRAIN**

Lakeland trails are steep and rocky, so you'll get plenty of opportunities to hone your technical skills

but James cleans successfully. After this the trail eases up and, although much more ridable, it keeps on going and going, requiring strong legs and dogged determination – or a lot of self-discipline not to look up the slope and psyche yourself out!

The surface becomes looser again just before we reach the smoother track for the final assault, so our legs are really feeling the burn. The trail is still going up though, and there's some distance to go. James and I dig deep and grind on, but 100m before the summit my phone starts pinging with emails and texts. I stop for a business break while James continues with his colliery-like energy and enthusiasm to the summit.

**Outdoors fraternity**

It's only here, at the pass, that we have our first sight of any other trail users, and they support my theory that most serious walkers are friendly, offering words of encouragement. While chatting with them, we see a lone cyclist disappearing out of sight and a quick scan of our group

confirms that James has broken free from his leash again. He soon re-emerges and slowly makes his way back up the hill to us, tail/bike between his legs.

Sadly the trail has been slightly sanitised in recent years, but it's still a fun, loose, rocky descent with zig-zag turns and berms. As the gradient eases the surface becomes smoother and we blast down it, racing one another until we turn off the main track and drop down a grassy bank on to a fun trail with a variety of surfaces to keep us on our toes.

It's the most unlikely place you'd expect to get a puncture after the rocks we've smashed down today, but snapper Russ has somehow torn his sidewall. We're now in shadow as the sun sinks behind the hill and we're cold for the first time today, so out come the extra layers and Haribo. With the sweets polished off, the empty packet is folded up to make a tyre boot and we're happily on our way once more. We cruise down the hillside in the setting sun and are soon back in the car park with tired legs but spotlessly clean bikes. The joys of summer riding... ☼

**🔪 BEST EATING 🍴**



The Newfield Inn in Seathwaite is a great traditional pub and the beer garden has views of the surrounding hills. With friendly staff, good no-nonsense home cooked food at good prices and generous portions, it's ideally suited to active outdoor types. It has a fine stock of local ales and some accommodation, or there's a B&B next door. Open from 11am to 11pm every day and serving food from 12 to 9pm, it's a reliable refreshment stop.  
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A full-page photograph of two mountain bikers riding down a rocky, gravelly trail in a forest. The lead rider is wearing a yellow and blue jersey and a red helmet. The second rider is wearing a black and yellow jersey and a white helmet. The trail is surrounded by tall evergreen trees and lush green undergrowth. The sky is overcast.

# WRECKING Mountain Biking<sup>UK</sup> CREW

## Mabie Forest, Scotland

There's more to this Scottish trail hub than graded routes, as local skills coach and guide Clive Forth shows us

Words & pics Seb Rogers





## THE LOWDOWN

MABIE FOREST, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY



**DISTANCE:** AS FAR AS YOU WANT

**CLIMBING:** AS MUCH AS YOU WANT

**TIME:** AS LONG AS YOU WANT

**GRADING:** MODERATE

**WHY RIDE HERE?** Mabie is a compact trail centre with routes for all abilities, but there's loads of off-piste fun to be had too

### RAD...

- Marked trails on tap
- 'Local' singletrack is there for the taking too
- Award-winning tea shop and great local hotel

### BAD...

- Route-finding off the waymarked trails can be hit and miss





The forest is full of fantastic twisty-turny singletrack trails

**Y**ou can't beat local knowledge. While clearly demarcated trails with a graded surface and marker posts at every junction have their place, there's nothing quite like following a skilled local down a hidden section of twisting singletrack through the trees. There might be the odd off-camber root, sticky-out branch or big puddle to deal with, but this is mountain biking in the raw. And it's a right laugh.

At least, it is until you lose sight of your handy local guide and the dense pines close in around you, *Blair Witch* style. Clive and Chris's riding skills in this narrow, twisty corridor have eclipsed mine, particularly with my angry monkey's worth of camera gear on my back trying its best to escape every time I turn a corner.

I stop to get my bearings. It's eerily dark in here, a thicket of branches and pine needles filtering out the daylight. The

silence is deafening. I can see no tyre tracks. "Hello?" I try. I can hear a faint shout from the left, somewhere. I decide to head in that direction...

## Definitely Mabie

Mabie is one of the 7stanes trail centres – seven areas scattered across Scotland's southern border region, providing Scottish and Sassenach riders alike with a huge choice of graded routes, from noob-friendly to shorts-staining. They're deservedly popular – an accessible alternative to backcountry Highlands or Lake District routes.

Mabie has three signed loops from easy to intermediate, plus the currently closed Dark Side skills loop complete with North Shore obstacles (which, confusingly, isn't marked as closed on the Mabie website). We were planning a day's riding in the forest, so we tapped up local guide and skills guru »

## The Wrecking Crew

Who are we?



**SEB ROGERS**  
This MBUK snapper, writer and bike tester loves forest singletrack



**GUEST RIDER**  
**CHRIS SMITH**  
The UK's original pro freerider. Chris is also a Wrecking Crew regular



**GUEST RIDER**  
**CLIVE FORTH**  
A former pro racer, Clive knows this area inside out and back to front



**JONNY ASHELFORD**  
Snapper, product tester and MBUK's spanner-wielding workshop manager.



**JAMES BLACKWELL**  
Five foot of trouble and energy. Art Ed Jimmer rides quick and talks quicker.



**OLLY FORSTER**  
MBUK's Staff Writer loves nothing more than fast and challenging trails.



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## THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE FOLLOWING A LOCAL DOWN A HIDDEN SECTION OF SINGLETRACK THROUGH THE TREES

Clive Forth to see if he wanted to join us. "Don't bother with the marked trails," said Clive. "I've got some much better stuff I can show you." Local trails for local riders? We're in.

Riders all over the UK tend to find – and in many cases, make – their own trails. In England and Wales it's often a contentious issue, because without the landowner's consent it's not legal. Scottish access laws are different. You can, with obvious exceptions (like gardens and areas where you'd normally pay for entry), more or less ride where you like, provided you do so with consideration. It's this relaxed attitude to access that's allowed Clive, and other Mabie-based riders, to quietly create their own trails in the forest.

You could summarise Clive's trails like this – they join up existing sections of trail centre singletrack or fireroad with chunks of barely visible (but super-fun) handlebar-width chicanery. Most of it's in the trees, though there are some

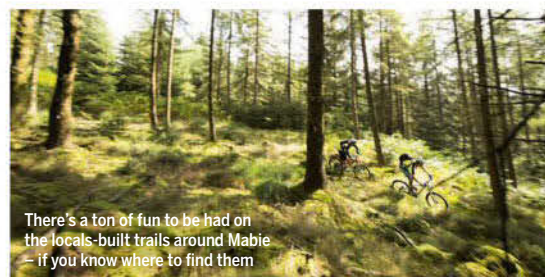
bits that run through open areas with great views over the surrounding hills.

At the risk of stating the obvious, there are no signposts. Nor, in fact, do these local trails appear on any maps. Or, indeed, Google Earth. Nor anywhere other than in the faint line of tyre-flattened dirt and pine needles, snapped twigs and pushed-aside undergrowth that marks the progress of probably a few dozen bikes a year.

### Follow the leader

It's a good thing, then, that Clive knows where he's going. Chris and I stick to his rear wheel as though our lives depend on it, carving turns in the loose, loamy soil as we descend on locally built singletrack and climb on fireroads. Clive keeps up a running commentary of where we are – out of Mabie, through Auchenfad, into Troston Forest.

From the top of Troston Hill the view opens up and we can see all the way to the Solway coast. If it weren't so hazy »



There's a ton of fun to be had on the locals-built trails around Mabie – if you know where to find them



### WRECKING CREW WISDOM

Provided you follow the access code for Scotland, you can ride pretty much anywhere around Mabie. The waymarked trails are good, but keep an eye open for gaps in the trees and walls where local riders have cut through and made their own singletrack. Respect what's there – don't move or cut anything – and you should be able to find the 'secret' local trails. Tread lightly, and they'll stay a well-kept secret for other riders in the know to enjoy.

SEB ROGERS MBUK SNAPPER

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### LOCALS DO...

- Start their rides on the trail centre loops
- Take a map and a GPS unit
- Take money for the tea shop
- Ride light

#### LOCALS DON'T...

- Cut down trees or branches, or dismantle walls to access trails
- Leave litter





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Chris cleverly manages to avoid braining himself on a fallen tree

we'd be able to see the distant fells of the Lake District. The furthest, and highest, point of the ride is the tower commemorating the Battle of Waterloo below The Criffel. This spectacular monument to Victorian folly-building has a stone spiral staircase inside and a frankly terrifyingly tiny space up top from where you can admire the view. So we do, because it'd be rude not to.

It'd also be rude to pass up the opportunity for copious quantities of tea and cake at the nearby New Abbey tearoom – they've won awards for their tea and everything. It's tempting to work our way through the entire menu but we've got a few miles of singletrack still to bash out so reluctantly we head back out.

### Airtime treat

Cutting behind the Shambellie walled garden, we're soon back into the familiar pattern of following Clive's rear wheel through the woods as he leads us through a maze of forgotten and barely-there trails.

Clive's got a treat in store for us. It turns out to be a relatively well-used 'unofficial' trail just off the red route, threading into the trees and carving a descent into the soft loam. Chris and Clive are in their

You can't go far wrong on a trail lined with mossy rocks



element, especially when the gradient steepens and a fallen tree provides an unexpected hip into a berm. The resulting airtime is a balance between time off the ground and avoiding an unwelcome brain/tree interface with a large section of overhanging bough, but both riders are up to the job.

We've been out all day, hardly touched the official Mabie trails and racked up a whole heap of descending – and it's all legal. All that remains is to hit the Mabie House Hotel bar for a well-earned pint or few. Local knowledge scoped out these trails but they're there for the taking. All that's needed is the willingness to explore and – almost certainly – get a little lost in the process. There's definitely more to Mabie than meets the eye. 🌀

## THE DIRECTORY

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MABIE FOREST

### GET THERE

Follow the signs to Dumfries from the A74(M). Once in Dumfries follow signs for the A710 (Solway Coast). Head south on the A710, ignoring the right turn to Mabie Park Farm. About 1km past this sign, take the right turn signed to the forest. Parking is £3 per day.

### FACILITIES

Mabie House Hotel is a fantastic stately home right next to the trails, with comfortable rooms and great food.

[www.mabiehousehotel.co.uk](http://www.mabiehousehotel.co.uk)

### CONTACT

[www.7stanesmountainbiking.com](http://www.7stanesmountainbiking.com)

### BIKE SHOPS

Cycle Centre, Dumfries  
[www.cycle-centre.com](http://www.cycle-centre.com),  
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### WHAT ELSE IS NEARBY?

#### Dalbeattie

Trails built around the local granite rocks, just down the road from Mabie. Home to 'The Slab'.

#### Ae

Beginner? Or seasoned DHer? You'll find something to keep you happy in the Forest of Ae.

#### Lake District

Just an hour or so down the M6, world-class backcountry riding.

## VERDICT

Trail centres are great places to ride, but Mabie's hidden gems prove there's often more to them than meets the eye. If you're willing to explore and get lost from time to time there's plenty of fun to be had, but you need to go with an open mind.







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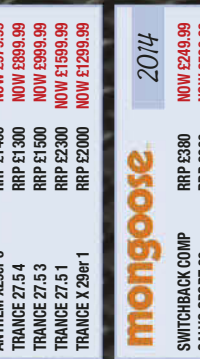
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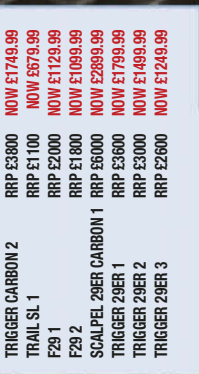
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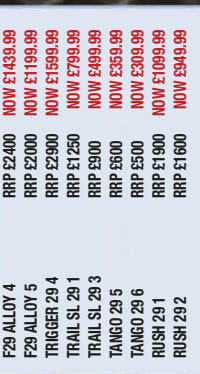
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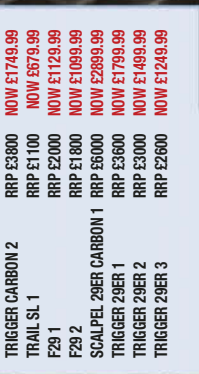
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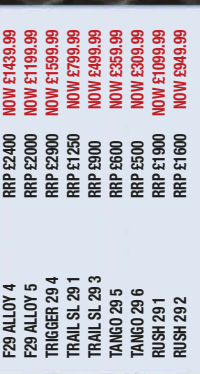
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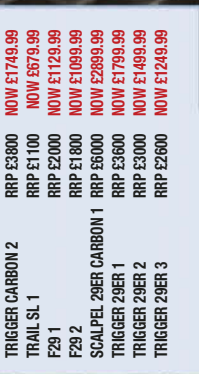
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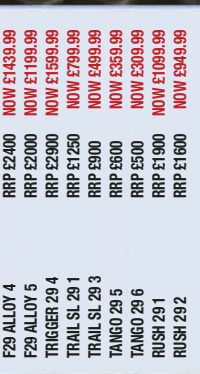
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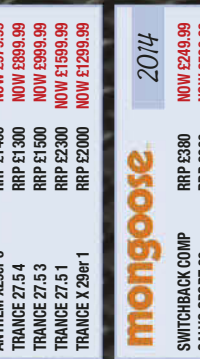
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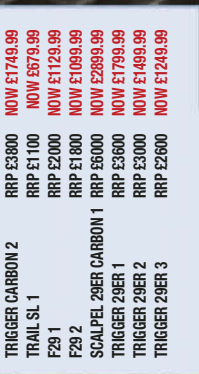
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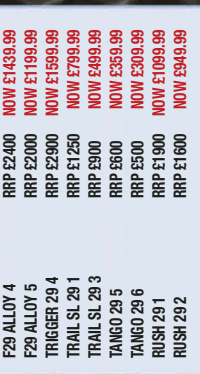
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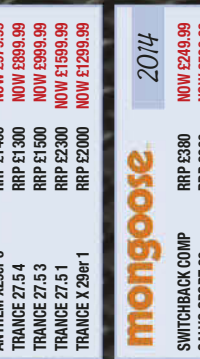
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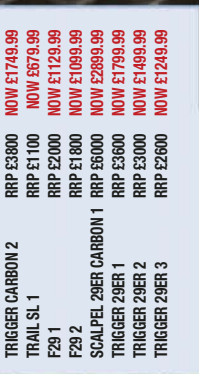
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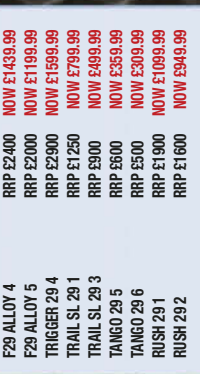
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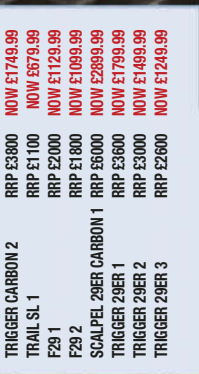
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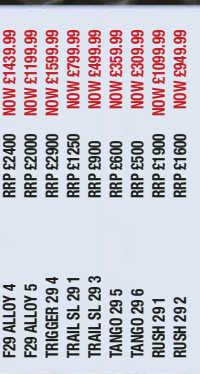
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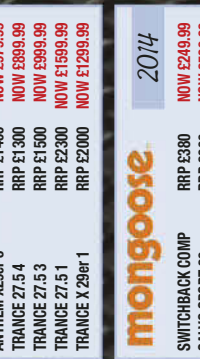
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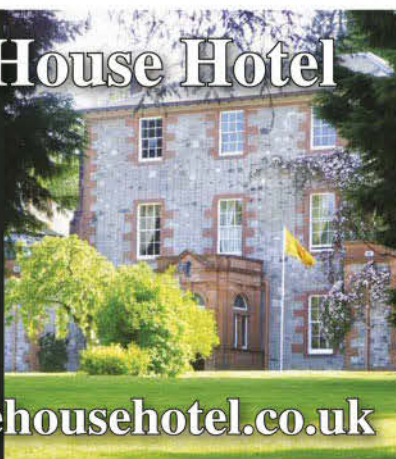
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